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Maoist Challenge to India's Internal Security

Singh

Irregular Warfare: The Maoist Challenge to India's Internal Security



Prakash Singh
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Irregular Warfare: The Maoist Challenge to India's Internal Security

Prakash Singh

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Foreword

Mr. Prakash Singh's most recent monograph on the Maoist Movement in India benefits from his unique perspective as a distinguished police officer in some of the country's most turbulent regions. His first monograph discussed the turmoil underway in India's northeast frontier. His current monograph provides a detailed history of insurgency in India, including an exhaustive examination of the history of uprisings starting from the Telengana insurrection of the mid-to-late 1940s to the Communist movement, sponsored by Mao Zedong's China. The insurgencies continued on through the Naxalite Movement to the Maoist Movement, which continues to threaten India's democracy. The paper's focus on the Naxalite Movement, which began in 1967 as a tribal peasant uprising following the split up of the Communist movement in India, provides the basic framework for studying insurgency in India. Mr. Singh places the Indian Government at the root of the basic causes of the uprising, specifically contributing to social inequality and economic injustice and the government's inability to address core grievances to prevent the expansion of unrest. Mr. Singh traces the transition of the peasant-led Naxalite movement, with its roots in a single village in West Bengal, to the Communist Party of India (Maoist) Movement, which has spread to some 20 of India's 28 states. India also includes six union territories and the National capitol territory of New Delhi.

Mr. Singh provides a running tally of events highlighting rebel attacks mostly on local police stations and outposts and the Indian government's general inability to launch an organized and effective counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign. The Maoist Movement continues to spread throughout the country not so much because its ideology is appreciated or even understood by the large majority of its followers, but more because of the inefficiency, corruption, and callousness of the government machinery and the absence of a single long-term policy to deal with the Maoist threat to the Indian State. The various approaches taken by different states under different political dispensation have been largely ineffective in tackling the insurgency. The Indian Constitution has limited the police's ability to ensure public order and the federal government feels powerless in a sense, according to Mr. Singh's analysis.

India's prime minister has declared more than once that the Maoist challenge is the biggest threat to the internal security of the country. Mr. Singh addresses the government's current two-pronged strategy: employing massive COIN operations and launching development schemes in a big way. The success of the approach, according to Mr. Singh, will depend on the ability of the Indian government to implement the development projects at the grass roots level and to improve governance in the far-flung provinces, particularly those inhabited by the various indigenous tribes. This monograph is a concise but thorough history of the Maoist movement and the government's response from the inception of the movement to the present day. As with Mr. Singh's previous monograph, how India accommodates its tribal minorities and reaches an accommodation with insurgents is a critical element for long-term regional stability and is of critical concern to the United States and the global community.

Kenneth H. Poole, Ed.D.
Director, JSOU Strategic Studies Department

About the Author

Prakash Singh has enjoyed a distinguished career as a police officer of India. He served and occupied the highest positions in the most turbulent theatres of the country: Nagaland, Assam, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir. He dealt with the insurgency in Nagaland, tackled the United Liberation Front of Assam, fought against Sikh terrorism in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, and contributed to combating militancy in Jammu and Kashmir. The Government of India, in recognition of his contribution to national security, awarded him the *Padma Shri* in 1991.



Singh was police chief of two of the biggest states of the country: Uttar Pradesh and Assam. He also served as director general of India's Border Security Force, a premier paramilitary outfit.

His publications include: *Nagaland* (National Book Trust, India, Fourth Edition); *The Naxalite Movement in India* (Rupa & Co., Third Impression, its French translation published by *Les Nuits Rouges*, Paris); *Disaster Response in India* (Center of Excellence and U.S. Foreign Military Studies Office), written in collaboration with two American authors; *Kohima to Kashmir, On the Terrorist Trail* (Rupa & Co.); and *India's Northeast: The Frontier in Ferment* (JSOU Press).

His articles (about 200) on political and security matters have been published on the editorial and op-ed pages of *The Times of India*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Indian Express*, *Financial Express*, *Economic Times*, *Pioneer*, and in journals published in India and abroad.

Singh lectures frequently in India and abroad on a wide range of subjects including terrorism, insurgency, Maoist movement, police reform, role of paramilitary forces, internal security problems, and more in venues such as the National Police Academy, Internal Security Academy, Academy of Administration, Defence Services Staff College, National Defence College, Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis in India, and in various colleges/universities/think tanks in the United States/Russia/Nepal/Bangladesh/United Arab Emirates.

Prakash Singh is the architect of police reforms in the country. The Supreme Court of India, on his intervention, issued a landmark judgment on the subject. He is also a crusader for integrity in public life and is active in community support activities and public interest matters. He is also an Associate Fellow of JSOU's Strategic Studies Department.

1. Introduction

India has a tradition of peasant uprisings. The Telengana insurrection (1946-1951) in Andhra Pradesh was the first major uprising of peasants in independent India. It was very broad-based and has been unparalleled since India's War of Independence in 1857. The peasants launched their struggle on economic issues against forced labor, illegal exactions, and unauthorized evictions, but it soon developed into an uprising against the feudal rule of the Hyderabad monarchy, the Nizam. The movement was directed by Communists from the very beginning and they mobilized large segments of the population. The peasants were able to establish their control over about 3,000 villages and their influence extended over several others. Armed struggle continued even after the Indian troops had liberated Hyderabad. About 4,000 lives were lost in the prolonged struggle until support was formally withdrawn by the Communist Party. It was an important landmark in the history of peasant struggles in the subcontinent.

The Communist movement in India split during 1964 in the aftermath of the Chinese-Indian border conflict (1962) instigated by China. The movement split into the Communist Party of India (Right) owing allegiance to the Soviet Union, and the Communist Party of India (Left) owing allegiance to the People's Republic of China. In due course, the parties came to be known as the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) respectively. The CPM was split further when the extremists in their ranks formed, on 22 April 1969, the CPI (Marxist-Leninist) based on the Thoughts of Mao Zedong; this wing gradually evolved into what is today known as the CPI (Maoist), and it is this group that is posing a formidable threat to the Indian State.

The Naxalite movement started in 1967 in a small village called Naxalbari situated at the tri-junction of India, Nepal, and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). It was a peasant uprising spearheaded by the Santhal tribals. They occupied the lands owned by the *kulaks* (wealthy peasants) and looted stocks of paddy stored in their godowns (warehouses). Though armed with bows and arrows, they confronted the police and there were violent clashes. China's *People's Daily* hailed it as a significant development for the Indian people's revolution. The prairie fire soon spread to several states of the country.

The movement came to be compared with other Maoist and Communist guerrilla organizations such as the Huks of Philippines, the Tupamaros of Uruguay, and the Shining Path of Peru. Some even dreamt of the liberated zones in India turning into little Vietnams. These dreams were to be shattered. The government came down with a heavy hand. Leaders of the movement were arrested or defeated in engagements with the police. The movement appeared to peter out.

The flame was doused, but the embers remained—and there was a resurgence of the movement in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Bihar in the 1980s. The People's War Group (PWG), with a firm base in the Telengana area of Andhra Pradesh, spread its tentacles to the adjoining areas of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Orissa. The government again undertook intensive counterinsurgency measures, and the movement was squashed.

However, as the basic causes of social inequality and economic justice had not been addressed, the movement experienced a resurgence at the beginning of the present century in a virulent form. It gained a militaristic orientation with the formation of a People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), equipped with sophisticated weapons. The movement metamorphosed from a Naxalite to a Maoist movement. The two major components of the movement, PWG and the Maoist Communist Center of India (MCCI), coalesced in 2004 to form the CPI (Maoist). The movement acquired a pan-India presence and has since spread to 20 states of the Indian Union. It continues to spread in ever-widening circles not so much because its ideology is appreciated or even understood by the large majority of its followers but more because of the inefficiency, corruption, and callousness of the government machinery. There is unfortunately no long-term policy to deal with the Maoist threat to the Indian State. Different states under different political dispensation have their own approach to tackling it. As police and public order are state level responsibilities under the Indian Constitution, the federal government feels hamstrung beyond a point.

The prime minister of India has more than once said that the Maoist challenge is the biggest threat to the internal security of the country.¹ The government has currently embarked on a two-pronged strategy: undertaking massive counterinsurgency operations and launching extensive development schemes. The success of this approach depends essentially on the ability of the government to implement the development projects at the ground level

and improve governance in geographically distant areas, particularly those inhabited by the tribal communities.

This monograph seeks to provide a concise but thorough history of this movement, and the government's response, from the movement's inception to the present day.



Figure 1. Map of India. Used by permission of Maps of India.

2. Spark in Naxalbari

The Naxalbari uprising erupted in 1967 in the small village of Naxalbari situated at the tri-junction of India, Nepal, and what is today Bangladesh. It lasted just 52 days and not more than a score of people were killed, but nevertheless “left a far-reaching impact on the entire agrarian scene throughout India. It was like the premeditated throw of a pebble bringing forth a series of ripples in the water.”²

Two decades had passed since the dawn of independence and yet large segments of the Indian population—peasants, workers, and members of tribal communities—were poor and continued to suffer from the worst forms of exploitation. A peaceful political process, the extreme left-wing Communists felt, would not bring about the changes needed to address these problems because vested interests controlled the levers of power, regulated the wheels of industry, and had a feudal stranglehold over the predominantly agrarian economy. An armed struggle was the only way out, they thought.

It was in this environment that an event in the Naxalbari village sparked a peasant uprising. The cultivators, most of them landless or sharecroppers, were long exploited by the *jotedars* (landlords). The peasants were organized by the extreme left-wing Communists, and the movement was spearheaded by three people: Charu Mazumdar, who was the ideologue; Kanu Sanyal, who was the organizer; and Jangal Santhal, who mobilized the Santhal tribal community.

Armed with bows and arrows, the cultivators occupied the lands of the *kulaks* and ploughed them to establish their ownership. Demonstrations were held against those holding large stocks of paddy rice. In many cases, the entire stocks were taken and distributed either amongst the protestors or sold locally at cheaper rates. There were violent clashes, and approximately 100 incidents were reported between March and May 1967.

And so, what Beijing called “a peal of spring thunder” crashed over North Bengal:

Revolutionary peasants in the Darjeeling area have risen in rebellion. Under the leadership of a revolutionary group of the Indian Communist Party, a red area of rural revolutionary armed struggle has been established in India. This is a development of tremendous

significance for the Indian people's revolutionary struggle...The Chinese people joyfully applaud this revolutionary storm of the Indian peasants in the Darjeeling area as do all Marxist-Leninists and revolutionary people of the whole world.³

The government was initially hesitant in using force against the tribal communities. However when the tribals killed police inspector Sonam Wangdi, who was sent to pacify them, the government had no alternative but to send a police contingent. In the confrontation which ensued, ten villagers including six women were killed. The situation thereafter progressively deteriorated. There were cases of murder, banditry, looting of property, and theft of arms and ammunition. The extremists moved about freely at the head of Santhal tribal members, who were armed with bows and arrows. On 10 June 1967, a mob of about 150 men carrying CPM flags raided the house of *jotedar* Nagen Roy Chaudhary in the Kharibari area and looted paddy rice, ornaments, and a double-barreled gun. They also abducted Nagen Roy Chaudhary and subsequently murdered him.

It was obvious that firm action was needed. On 5 July 1967, after a good deal of dithering, the West Bengal cabinet decided in favor of police action. However, it was only on 12 July that the police operations commenced. There was no real resistance, and the movement was squashed with ease. About 700 people were arrested. The police success was due partly to the massive show of strength (about 1,500 policemen were deployed) and partly the harrying tactics of constant raids which kept the extremists constantly on the run. Jangal Santhal was utterly famished and in low spirits when arrested on 10 August 1967; he had not eaten anything in the previous two days.

The Naxalbari uprising was a localized affair but, as has been rightly said, it "marked an advance for the people of India as the Paris Commune had marked an advance for the world proletariat."⁴

The failure of the movement in Naxalbari was attributed by its leaders to lack of a strong party organization, failure to build a powerful mass base, ignorance of military affairs, and a formal attitude toward land reforms.⁵ Samar Sen assessed the Naxalbari uprising in the following words:

Naxalbari exploded many a myth and restored faith in the courage and character of the revolutionary Left in India. It seemed that the ever-yawning gap between precept and practice since Telengana

would be bridged. Indeed, the upheaval was such that nothing remained the same after Naxalbari. People had to readjust their position vis-à-vis every aspect of the system: political, administrative, military, cultural.⁶

The Naxalbari uprising may not have achieved much by itself, but it was nevertheless a watershed in the history of the Indian Communist movement. It was a movement aimed at transforming the society, an upsurge blessed by Beijing. From Naxalbari the sparks flew all over the country, and there was political upheaval.

Birth of Revolutionary Party

The extremists felt the need for greater organization coming under an umbrella, and so they formed an umbrella organization, the All India Coordination Committee, in November 1967. Its leaders were of the view that there was an excellent revolutionary situation in the country with all the classical symptoms enunciated by Vladimir Lenin, the Marxist revolutionary theorist. In May 1968, the Committee changed its name to the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR). In due course, the extremists came to the conclusion that they must form an all-India party, because “Without a revolutionary party, there can be no revolutionary discipline and without revolutionary discipline the struggles cannot be raised to a higher level.”⁷

On 22 April 1969, the 100th birth anniversary of Lenin, the AICCCR declared its own liquidation and the formation of the CPI Marxist-Leninist (ML) based on the thoughts of Mao Zedong. The extremist movement acquired an organizational and ideological base after groping for nearly two years. A number of splinter groups continued to exist, but the CPI (ML) gradually emerged as the most important component of the extremist movement in the country.

The political resolution⁸ adopted by the CPI (ML) showed the party's assessment of the prevailing conditions in India and its approach to the various problems. These were, briefly, as follows:

- a. India is a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country.
- b. The principal contradiction in the country is between feudalism and the peasant masses.
- c. The Indian revolution is at the stage of People's Democratic Revolution, the main content of which is agrarian revolution.
- d. The revolutionary situation in India is excellent with the ruling classes enmeshed in economic and political crisis.
- e. The party would strive to build a united front of all revolutionary classes on the basis of alliance between workers and peasants.
- f. Guerrilla warfare would be the basic tactic of struggle.

The resolution on party organization stated in unambiguous terms that the CPI (ML) would be a party of armed revolution. “No other path exists before the Indian people but the path of armed revolution.”⁹

Kanu Sanyal, the firebrand Naxalite leader, announced the formation of the CPI (ML) at a rally held in Calcutta on 1 May 1969. The new party, he claimed, will make “a new sun and a new moon shine in the sky of our great motherland.”¹⁰ Significantly, the rally was preceded by violent clashes between the Naxalites and supporters of the United Front. Bombs, firecrackers, pipe guns, and brickbats (bricks) were freely used in the clashes. It was a precursor of the shape of things to come.

The formation of the CPI (ML) was welcomed by the Chinese Communist Party, which published the party's political resolution in the *People's Daily*. Beijing Radio welcomed the event. Recognition also came from the Marxist-Leninist groups of other countries like the United Kingdom, Albania, and Sri Lanka. The CPI (ML) emerged as a contingent of the international Communist movement.

3. Prairie Fire Spreads

The Naxalite movement had a meteoric phase for about two years from the formation of the party in May 1969 until the end of June 1971. The ripples starting from Naxalbari spread in ever-widening circles to almost all parts of the country. The *People's Daily* of China, in its editorial of 5 July 1967, commented as follows:

The spark in Darjeeling will start a prairie fire and will certainly keep the vast expanses of India ablaze. That a great storm of revolutionary armed struggle will eventually sweep across the length and breadth of India is certain. Although the course of the Indian revolutionary struggle will be long and tortuous, the Indian revolution guided by great Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong's Thought, will surely triumph.¹¹

There were about 4,000 incidents in the entire country during the period. Most of these were reported from West Bengal (3,500) followed by Bihar (220) and Andhra Pradesh (70). The dominant theme of the movement was the *annihilation of class enemies*. It was then General Secretary of the Communist Party of India Charu Mazumdar's distinctive contribution to the Naxal ideology. It was his triumph as well as his tragedy—triumph because it achieved a considerable measure of success in the initial stages when several *jotedars* fled from the countryside and there were tremors among all shades of oppressors, and tragedy because the killings, not always discriminate, alienated the general mass of the population. Further, there were serious differences within the party on the program which weakened and fragmented the movement.

Annihilation of class enemies was projected as a class struggle in a higher form and the beginning of a guerilla war. The class enemies included landlords and their agents, rich peasants, moneylenders, and police informers. While pursuing the campaign, Charu Mazumdar's enthusiasm overran his discretion and he made the fantastic statement that "he who has not dipped his hand in the blood of class enemies can hardly be called a Communist."¹² The statement was criticized by the party leaders and later disapproved even by the Chinese mentors. Charu's exhortations nevertheless fired the

imagination of party workers, and the Naxalite movement spread like a prairie fire.

The holding of the first Party Congress in May 1970 was a landmark in the evolution of the Naxalite movement in the country. The Party Congress was held in secret in Calcutta and was attended by delegates from various states of the country. The party acknowledged its links with the Chinese Communist Party and conveyed its “revolutionary greetings to Chairman Mao Zedong to whose all conquering thought and to whom personally our party owes its birth and phenomenal growth.”¹³ The Congress adopted the Party Program, the Party Constitution, the Political Organizational Report, and elected the Central Committee.

The party program emphasized that India had achieved “sham independence” in 1947; that Indian people were weighed down under “four huge mountains,” namely, U.S. imperialism, Soviet social imperialism, feudalism, and comprador-bureaucrat capital; that the present Indian society was semi-feudal and semi-colonial in character; that the government was suppressing the genuine rights of all the nationalities and national and religious minorities like Kashmiris, Nagas, and Mizos, who were being denied the right of self-determination; that the country was in the stage of democratic revolution; and that India’s liberation would be achieved by people’s war, which would involve creating small bases of armed struggle all over the country by waging guerrilla warfare.¹⁴

The political-organizational report claimed that peasants’ armed struggle under the leadership of the CPI (ML) had spread far and wide and engulfed 12 states of the country. It gave a call for strengthening the party, which was declared as the “most important, most immediate and most sacred task of the revolutionary people of India.” The party expressed its resolve to continue the annihilation campaign in a more determined and concerted way and “develop the struggles in mighty waves.”¹⁵

Charu Mazumdar called upon the party cadres to start as many points of armed struggle as possible. His message was to expand anywhere and everywhere. Such expansions were particularly noticed in Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh, Debra-Gopiballavpur in West Bengal, Mushahari in Bihar, and Palia in the Lakhimpur district of Uttar Pradesh (UP).

West Bengal

The Midnapur district of West Bengal bordering Bihar and Orissa witnessed a well planned and well organized Naxalite movement in the Debra and Gopiballavpur police station areas. The district has a sizeable population of members from the Santhal, Lodha, and Oraon tribes. The majority of them were landless laborers, though a small proportion owned small plots of land or cultivated the *jotedars*' land under the *barga* (sharecropping) system. It was easy for the Communist revolutionaries to work up the land hunger of these simple and unsophisticated peasants. Besides, adept as they were in the use of bows and arrows, they could be deadly if provoked to violence. The leading figures of the movement in Debra were Bhabadeb Mondal, an advocate, and Gundadhar Murmu, a local tribal leader. In Gopiballavpur, Santosh Rana and Ashim Chatterji were the moving spirits. The former was the recipient of a first class Master of Science (Tech) degree from Calcutta University and the latter was a product of the Presidency College, Calcutta.

There were a number of incidents involving attacks on the landlords. In Gopiballavpur, Ashu Mahapatra, a *jotedar*, was killed on 5 March 1970. Another *jotedar*, Narayan Pati, who was accused of building up a counter-revolutionary force, was killed on 21 March 1970. In Debra, the Naxalites guerrillas annihilated Kanai Kuiti, who they considered a major ruthless, feudal dominator, on 19 March 1970. There was panic and, as a result, a number of landlords, rich peasants, and big businessmen fled from the area and took shelter in Midnapur town. The government of West Bengal was forced to be cognizant of these incidents and start police action. The movement in Midnapur district was gradually stamped out.

Bihar

In Bihar, the Mushahari block of Muzaffarpur district witnessed stirrings on the Naxalbari pattern. It covered 12 villages with a population of about 10,000 people. There were disputes between landlords and peasants over occupancy rights, cutting of trees, and so forth, and the peasants were angered over being subjected to various forms of social discrimination by the upper classes. It was an explosive mixture, and the sparks flying off from Naxalbari set it ablaze.



Figure 2. Districts of Bihar. Map used by permission of Maps of India.

In the early stages, Naxalite activities in the area were confined to three villages with Gangapur as the center. In April 1968, the peasants of Gangapur harvested the *arahar* (a kind of lentil) crop of the landlord in broad daylight. This was the starting point of trouble. Retaliation was quick. Bijli Singh, the *zamindar* (landlord) of Narsinghpur, organized an attack on the peasants with 300 men armed with *lathis* (sticks), spears, swords, daggers, and firearms. The landlord himself came on an elephant and brought two cartloads of stones.¹⁶ A bizarre fight followed and it went on for about four hours. The landlord and his hoodlums eventually fled.

The humbling of this very powerful landlord by the poor peasantry, mostly belonging to scheduled castes had a magic effect on the neighboring villages. The landlords grew panicky and the peasants became more courageous and far more determined. Now they felt that the landlords could be beaten and driven out if the peasants were united.¹⁷

Gangapur became a symbol of the fighting peasantry, and the Mushahari struggle took a great leap. Soon after, *Kisan Sangram Samitis* (Peasants' Action Committees) and *Gram Rakshak Dals* (Village Defense Squads) were organized in most of the villages. The *Dals* were instructed to annihilate the landlords and their *goondas* (bad characters), seize forcibly the properties of the rich people, and establish people's rule in the villages.¹⁸

The chain of violent incidents alarmed the authorities, and it was decided to undertake combing operations in the area to track down the Naxalites. The movement in Mushahari thereafter lost its momentum. The Mushahari struggle nevertheless caused ripples in other parts of Bihar. It was claimed that the entire North Bihar was no longer in its trance.

Uttar Pradesh

In UP, the Palia area of Lakhimpur district witnessed some turbulence. The area is covered with forests and is inhabited by a tribal community called the Tharus. The state government encouraged peasants from other areas, especially Eastern UP, to come to Palia, clear the forests, and undertake cultivation. These people, some of whom were rich and influential, forcibly occupied big chunks of land and ejected members of the tribes from their land. The Naxalites exploited their grievance. Led by Vishwanath Tewari, they committed a number of violent incidents. The chief minister of the state, in a statement on 8 May 1969, admitted that there had been irregularities in the distribution of *gaon sabha* (village council) land. Police action snuffed out the movement. There were also stray incidents of violence in other districts of the state including Kanpur, Unnao, Hardoi, Farrukhabad, Bareilly, Moradabad, Bahraich, Varanasi, and Azamgarh.

Other States

The prairie fire of the rebellion singed several other states also. In Orissa (now known as Odisha), the districts particularly affected were Koraput and Ganjam on the Andhra border and Mayurbhanj on the West Bengal border.



Figure 3. Districts of Orissa. Map used by permission of Maps of India.

In Madhya Pradesh, the districts of the Chhattisgarh region, namely Raipur, Durg, Bastar, Bilaspur, Sarguja, and Raigarh were affected. Party cells were formed in these districts under the guidance of Jogi Roy, the CPI (ML) leader of the region. Members of tribes in Bastar area were particularly receptive to Naxalite propaganda as they nursed a feeling of neglect by the state government. Naxalite posters could be seen in Jagdalpur, the district headquarters.

In the Punjab, the Naxalite activities were noted in Jalandhar, Ludhiana, and Sangrur districts. The Naxalites murdered landlords, money lenders, farmers, and policemen. They even had the audacity to kill a deputy superintendent of police and ransack firearms from a police post in Sangrur district in September 1971. Revolutionary writers produced a prolific amount of literature. The important journals were *People's Path* in English and *Lok Yudh, Bagawat, and Lakeer* in Punjabi.

In Rajasthan, the Naxalites were scattered in the districts of Ganganagar, Sikar, Chittorgarh, and Jaipur. In Maharashtra, the appearance of pro-Mao slogans in Bombay was the only manifestation of Naxalite activity.

In Kerala, there were different shades of Naxalism. The CPI (ML) presence was felt mainly in the Cannanore and Calicut districts of Malabar, and Kottayam, Quilon, and Trivandrum districts. The group led by Kunnikkal Narayanan hit the headlines when its members attacked the Tellicherry and Pulppalli police stations in 1968. In Tamilnadu, Naxal activities were confined to the display of posters in some districts and providing shelter to extremists from Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.

In Assam, Naxal posters and leaflets were seen in Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, and Cachhar districts. The interrogation of some Naxalites revealed that they had received training in the rebel Naga camps in Nagaland. In Tripura, the Naxalites set up cells among the students and youth, and there were incidents involving raids on educational institutions.

Students and Youth

Charu Mazumdar gave a call to the students and youth in March 1970 to plunge into the revolutionary struggle. The young generation, particularly of West Bengal, responded to his clarion call by carrying out raids on educational institutions, boycotting examinations, disfiguring the statues of national leaders, and hoisting red flags. It was a kind of cultural revolution. Mazumdar justified the attacks on schools and colleges on the ground that the prevailing educational system was, he believed, a colossal fraud. The statues and portraits disfigured or demolished included those of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindra Nath Tagore, and Jawahar Lal Nehru. It was hailed as a “festival of idol smashing.” The party’s argument was that they all sided with the “enemies of the people” and did not support the peasants’ revolt or uphold the cause of people struggling to overthrow imperialism. Mahatma Gandhi was denigrated as a “traitor” who served the British imperialists by recruiting Indian soldiers to defend the British Empire during the World War, and disarmed the Indian people with his “spurious” theory of nonviolence.¹⁹

In Delhi, the Naxalite ideology attracted many students of the university campus. The institutions particularly affected were the St. Stephen’s College and the Delhi School of Economics. Girls were not to be left behind, as there were small groups of Marxist-Leninists in Indraprastha College, Miranda House, and Lady Shri Ram College. About 20 students were subsequently

found missing and were reported to have gone to West Bengal, Bihar, and Assam to work among the poor and landless peasants. Interestingly, most of them came from the higher strata of society. They were, however, unable to stand the rigors of village life and in due course returned to their homes. They were, it seems, attracted more by the romance of Naxal philosophy.

Liberation by 1975

Charu Mazumdar's assessment was that "every corner of India is like a volcano" about to erupt. Toward the end of 1970, he proposed the formation of a People's Liberation Army. "I do not indulge in day-dreaming when I say that by 1970-71, the People's Liberation Army will march across a vast area of West Bengal," he declared. He even set the target for achieving the liberation of India by 1975:

When I say 'Make the 70s the Decade of Liberation' I cannot think beyond 1975. The idea of today's armed struggle was first born in the mind of one man. That idea has now filled the minds of ten million people.²⁰

The first incident of arms snatching happened in the Magurjan village in the Purnea district of Bihar on 27 October 1970, when the party cadres attacked a police picket and managed to decamp with six rifles and sixty rounds of ammunition. Such incidents, as we shall see later, became frequent and of a much more serious nature.

Mazumdar was a man in a hurry. He wanted to jump several stages and capsule the liberation of India within a few years. He did not understand that any such objective in a huge country like India would require the support of a significant section of the population, building up of mass organizations, seeking the support of like-minded groups, and building up a formidable People's Army well equipped with sophisticated weapons. No wonder his dream was shattered.

4. Crackdown: Operation Steeplechase

The Government of India was greatly concerned over the spread of Naxal violence. It decided to launch joint operations by the army and the police in the bordering districts of West Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, which were worst affected. The operations were undertaken from 1 July to 15 August 1971 and were code named Operation Steeplechase. The broad strategy of the security forces was to surround as large an area as possible and seal the routes of entry and exit. The army formed the outer cordon and the Central Reserve Police Force the inner ring. The local police, who were generally accompanied by a magistrate, carried out a thorough search of the area. Suspected Naxalites were arrested while illicit weapons, ammunition, and explosives were seized. Wherever possible, simultaneous action was taken in the neighboring areas also so the Naxalites trying to sneak out were apprehended. These operations covered the Midnapur, Purulia, Burdwan, and Birbhum districts of West Bengal; Singhbhum, Dhanbad, and Santhal Parganas of Bihar; and Mayurbhanj of Orissa. In West Bengal, the operations extended over the entire period of 45 days, but in Bihar and Orissa the duration was much shorter.

Operation Steeplechase achieved the desired results, though not to the extent anticipated by the administration. The organizational apparatus of the Naxalites in the aforesaid districts was thrown out of gear, and the party activists fled from their known hideouts to other places in search of safety. Reports of violence dropped. Incidents of arms snatching declined. Above all, it restored the confidence of the people in the strength of the administration. The effectiveness of the operation was however squandered by its premature publicity, which gave Naxalite activists the time to escape. In Birbhum, for example, of the 400 known Naxalites, only about 150 could be caught. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the operation stemmed the advancing tide of Naxalism and disrupted the Communist extremists' organizational network in the worst affected areas of the three states.

Internal differences within the party were meanwhile having a debilitating effect. The CPI (ML) was doubtless the most important component of the extremist movement in the country, but it did not represent all the shades of extremism. Charu Mazumdar compounded the problem by his inability to carry the team along. He had the intellectual brilliance but not the organizational skill to keep the heterogeneous elements together, and

the CPI (ML) soon became a house divided. Mazumdar's policy of reckless terrorism in the urban areas and frenzied attempts to achieve the liberation of India by 1975, resulting in the loss of precious cadres, coupled with the move to consolidate all powers under himself in disregard of the Politburo and the Central Committee, led to heated debates within the party. Discordant voices began to be heard.

The dissidents denounced Mazumdar's policies as a perversion and vulgarization of Marxism-Leninism. The attack was spearheaded by Sushital Roy Choudhury of West Bengal, Satyanaryan Singh of Bihar, and Shiv Kumar Mishra of UP. Mazumdar was criticized for ignoring the need for base areas, neglecting economic struggles, going in for frontal clashes, giving up all ideas of self-defense, and trying to set himself up as the master of India's revolution, elevating his persona above the party. Mazumdar retaliated by dubbing the dissidents as centrists, and contended that without class struggle accompanied by annihilation of class enemies, the initiative of the peasant masses could not be released and people's army could not be created. These ideological differences weakened the party from within.

The government pressure on the Naxalites was meanwhile increasing. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced in the Rajya Sabha on 11 August 1970 that the government was committed to putting down the activities of Naxalites and other extremist elements "with all the strength at its command." These elements would be "fought to the finish," she said.²¹ The Operation Steeplechase had already broken the backbone of Naxalites in the bordering area of West Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. By the first quarter of 1972, almost all the top Naxalite leaders including Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santhal, Ashim Chatterjee, and several others had been apprehended by the police. There were about 1,400 Naxalites in jail in Andhra Pradesh, about 2,000 in Bihar, about 4,000 in West Bengal, and 1,000 in Kerala, UP, and elsewhere.²² Charu Mazumdar was also arrested by the Calcutta police detectives from the Entally area of East Calcutta in the early hours of 16 July 1972. He was a shattered and disillusioned person by that time. A few days later, on 28 July 1972, Charu Mazumdar died.

Mazumdar's death marked the end of the first phase of Naxalite movement in the country. Mazumdar stands tallest among the Indians of the post-independence period who attempted to bring about an armed revolution to overthrow a system they sincerely believed had failed to deliver. However, he was not pragmatic and tried to move too quickly and achieve

the liberation of India within a short time frame without mobilizing the masses. He also underestimated the strength of the state apparatus which came down heavily on the Naxal cadres. Nevertheless, the fact remains that an idea was born, a party had been formed, and that large parts of the country had been made aware of the Naxal ideology.

After Mazumdar: Divisions in Party

The period following the death of Charu Mazumdar witnessed subdivisions and fragmentations in the Naxalite movement. Broadly speaking, there were two sets of groups—one which continued to owe allegiance to Mazumdar and his ideology, and the other which was opposed to it. The pro-Mazumdar Naxalites were further subdivided into pro-Lin Biao and anti-Lin Biao factions. Lin Biao was, at one stage, considered the successor to Mao and his “closest comrade in arms.” He believed that “Mao Zedong’s theory of the establishment of rural revolutionary base areas and the encirclement of the cities from the countryside is of outstanding and universal practical significance for the present revolutionary struggles of the oppressed nations and peoples in Asia, Africa and Latin America.”²³ His ideas made a powerful impact on the Naxalites in India, who interpreted them to imply a green signal for a people’s war in India. Lin Biao was, however, disgraced at the Tenth Congress of Communist Party of China held in August 1973. The faction owing allegiance to him nevertheless continued to follow the same path. Another group which accepted the Chinese criticism of Lin Biao, while continuing to swear by Charu Mazumdar, came to be known as the Anti-Lin Biao Group.

The Pro-Lin Biao Group led by Mahadeb Mukherjee held a Party Congress in December 1973 where they reaffirmed the party program of 1970 as “the only correct program for the entire period of India’s Peoples Democratic Revolution and which most aptly and boldly upholds the correct line of Comrade Lin Biao.”²⁴ The group embarked on a program of annihilations, gun snatchings, jail breaks, and attacks on policemen in West Bengal, but there was not much support from the people to their activities. The extremists had great difficulty in finding shelter and were always on the run.

The Anti-Lin Biao Group was active in Bihar, particularly in Bhojpur district where the lower castes lived in conditions of extreme poverty and were subjected to social exploitation. These lower caste people were organized

by Jagdish Mahto, a school teacher, and Rameshwar Ahir, an ex-convict. They killed several landlords. According to an estimate, the Naxalites killed about 90 landlords from 1971 to 1977.²⁵ The movement however collapsed after the Bihar Military Police and the Central Reserve Police conducted an extensive operation, Operation Thunder, in the district. Rameshwar Ahir was killed in an encounter with the police and Jagdish Mahto was killed by the villagers.

Among the groups opposed to Charu Mazumdar, the largest was the one led by Satyanaryan Singh of Bihar, who rejected Charu Mazumdar's policy of annihilation of class enemies on the grounds that it had alienated the people. Another formidable group opposed to Charu was the Andhra faction known as the Nagi Reddy group.

The imposition of emergency in 1975 led to the banning of almost all the Naxalite groups in the country. Most of the party workers were arrested and put in jail. In 1977, following the defeat of Indira Gandhi in the elections and the installation of Janata Government at the center, four Naxalite groups,²⁶ in a memorandum to Prime Minister Morarji Desai, pleaded for the release of party workers and the withdrawal of cases and warrants of arrests against them. The Home Ministry, in a statement released on 15 April 1997, disclosed that a total of 645 Naxalites had been detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act all over the country, the state-wide breakdown being 581 in West Bengal, 38 in Kerala, 14 in Andhra Pradesh, and 12 in Tamilnadu. Discussions between the Naxalite leaders and the Government of India eventually led to the prime minister announcing on 3 May 1977 in Ahmedabad that the center had instructed the state governments to release all the Naxalites held in detention.²⁷

The CPI (ML), at a meeting held at the Shahid Minar Maidan in Calcutta on 22 April 1978 to observe the foundation day of the party, appealed to all the Communist revolutionaries to unite under the party's flag. Naxalite unity, however, remained a far cry. In 1980, it was estimated that there were about 30 groups functioning in different parts of the country, the important ones being CPI (ML), Satyanaryan Singh, CPI (ML) Chandra Pulla Reddy, PWG, Unity Center of Communist Revolutionaries of India (ML), Organizing Committee of Communist Revolutionaries Kanu Sanyal, Communist Bolshevik Party, and Maoist Communist Center (MCC). These groups were particularly active in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, though stray

incidents were reported from West Bengal, Tamilnadu, Kerala, Tripura, Punjab, Assam, UP, and Maharashtra also.²⁸

The history of the Naxalite movement from 1980 to 1990 is largely a history of the Naxalite formations in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar.

5. Revival of the Movement

The Naxalite movement witnessed a revival in the 1980s, particularly in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. This was the second phase of the movement.

Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh has a radical tradition going back to the Telengana struggle of 1946-51. Subsequently, there was a Girijan uprising in the Srikakulam district in the 1960s. The Girijans, or hill people, comprised about 90 percent of the total population of the district, and they inhabited what was then known as the Agency areas, which spread over 509 square miles of Eastern Ghats. There was a law that no land would be transferred from a Girijan to a non-Girijan without the specific permission of the district collector. This law was, unfortunately, frequently violated. The traders and money lenders took full advantage of the grinding poverty of the Girijans. They gave them daily necessities of life like tobacco, kerosene, salt, chilies, and cloth on credit and lent them money for purchase of seeds and payment of taxes. Those unable to clear their debt were made to part with their land. In the process, much of the fertile land was gradually taken from the Girijans and passed into the hands of plainsmen. The Girijans became hewers of wood and drawers of water in their own country.

It was against this background that Vempatapu Satyanarayana, a school teacher, started organizing the Girijan tribals to fight for their rights. He achieved a fair measure of success. The wages of farm labor went up four times, the landlord's share of harvest from lands leased to sharecroppers was slashed from two-thirds to one-third, and about 2,000 acres of land were wrested from the landlords and restored to the Girijans. A significant feature of the movement was the participation of engineering and medical students who provided the middle rank leadership. The movement took a violent turn after the incidents in Naxalbari. Vempatapu Satyanarayana organized the Girijans into guerrilla squads, or *dalams*. The *dalams* would attack the houses of landlords and money-lenders and loot their property and food grains. There were a number of encounters with the police. The special representative of *The Statesman*, in his report of 14 December 1968, mentioned that the state government's writ did not run in scores of isolated

mountain hamlets where the tribesmen held complete sway, that many terrified landlords fled from the Agency area, and the forest and revenue officials found it difficult to carry out their functions in the Naxal infested villages.

Revolutionary songs composed by Saryanarayana and others became popular with Girijans and fired the imagination of the people. The following lines were penned by Satyanarayana himself:

*Rise up, oh, ye Adivasi heroes,
And flex the muscles
of your taut and sinewy body
And plunge with the force of a hurricane
Into battle against your class enemies.²⁹*

The government realized the seriousness of the situation. An interstate conference of top officials of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh was held at Visakhapatnam on 12 August 1969, and it was decided to coordinate police action against Naxalites in the bordering areas. A police offensive in Srikakulam district started toward the end of 1969. In the encounters which followed, important Naxalite leaders like Bhaskar Rao, Subbarao Panigrahi, and Nirmala Krishnamurti were killed. These losses greatly upset the Central Committee of the CPI (ML), and it issued a statement in January 1970 calling upon the members of the party “to avenge the dastardly murder of our heroic comrades of Srikakulam by annihilating as many class enemies as possible.”³⁰ The police operations showed no signs of slowing down and, on 10 July 1970, Vempatapu Satyanarayana and Adibhatla Kailasam, the two top Naxalite leaders of Srikakulam, were killed in an encounter in the Bori Hills of Parvathipuram. Their death marked the end of Girijan insurgency in Srikakulam district.

The volcano, however, erupted in another region—in the Telengana area of Andhra Pradesh. Some of Charu Mazumdar’s followers, notably Kondapalli Seetharamaiah, K.G. Sathyamurthy, and Suniti Kumar Ghosh formed a central organizing committee in December 1972 and decided to concentrate on mobilizing the masses. Seetharamaiah was arrested on 26 April 1977 in Nagpur when the police intercepted a vehicle carrying arms. He was later released, but Seetharamaiah jumped bail and thereafter started organizing underground activities. He broke away from the Central Organizing Committee, CPI (ML) and, on 20 April 1980, announced the formation of CPI

(ML) PWG. The Naxalite movement found a fertile ground in the Telengana area, partly because the area is dotted with rivers, hills, and forests, and thus provides an ideal setting for guerrilla warfare, and partly because the tribals of the area were economically exploited by the landlords and government officials. As stated by P.S. Sundaram:

The tribals owning small pieces of land are expropriated and sharecroppers impoverished. They are all kept under perpetual bondage towards repayment of a small debt supposedly taken generations ago. The forest wealth is freely smuggled out by contractors with the connivance of the forest staff. The tribals get neither a remunerative price for their forest produce nor a fair wage for their labor.³¹

The social dimensions of the exploitation were even more revolting. The landlords of the region, addressed as *Dora*, or master, would invariably humiliate the peasants and exploit their womenfolk. It was common for a poor woman to accompany the bride as part of the dowry. She had to be “at the disposal of the master and his guests” and had to satisfy “just about any male in the master’s household.”³² Naxalite songs are replete with references to rape by landlords and to girls growing up with the knowledge of the inevitability of rape that awaits them.

Kondapally Seetharamaiah concentrated on organizational consolidation and expansion. Forest Committees were constituted in the jungle areas and regional committees in the plains areas. Armed *dalams* comprising six to ten members were formed. There were about 50 such *dalams* in the Telengana area of Andhra Pradesh.

The activities of the PWG broadly followed the pattern below:

- Redistribution of land
- Enforcing payment of minimum wages to the farm labor
- Imposing taxes and penalties
- Holding people’s courts
- Destroying government property
- Kidnapping government functionaries
- Attacking policemen
- Enforcing a social code

The PWG is believed to have redistributed nearly half a million acres of land across Andhra Pradesh. The *modus operandi* was to occupy forcibly the excess land of big land-owners and give them away to the landless or to the laborers working for the landlord. As per the state government's own figures, the radicals forcibly occupied and redistributed 80,000 acres of agricultural land and 1,200,000 acres of forest land. This forced agrarian justice brought about a sea change in the feudal system prevailing in the Telengana district. The poor people found that what the politicians had been talking about and the government promising year after year could be translated into a reality only with the intervention of the Naxalites. Potturi Venkateswara Rao, editor of *Andhra Prabha*, commented as follows on PWG's sway over the Telengana districts:

...the PWG practically runs a 'parallel government' in Karimnagar, Warangal and Adilabad districts. It collects 'taxes and penalties' from forest and excise contractors, rich landlords and businessmen. It receives complaints from the public, conducts enquiries and investigations, holds people's courts, pronounces judgments and awards, and administers punishments.³³

The PWG cadres caused extensive damage to government property, attacking railway stations, burning government buses, setting telephone exchanges on fire, and vandalizing government offices. Party activists frequently resorted to kidnappings to secure the release of their cadres. The *cause celebre* was the kidnapping of six Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers including a principal secretary of the state government and the collector of East Godavari district on 27 December 1987 while they were returning from a tribal welfare meeting at Pulimatu in the district. Their jeeps were stopped by 10 gun-wielding guerrillas, including three women, near Gurthedu, an interior village. The PWG demanded the release of eight jailed Naxalites. There was quite a commotion. Commandos were airlifted from Delhi. The state government, however, decided to play safe and the eight Naxalites in Rajahmundry jail were released. The PWG got tremendous propaganda mileage out of the incident.

The revolutionary writers contributed to popularizing the Naxalite ideology. They worked under the banner of *Jana Natya Mandali*, the cultural front of the PWG. Its moving spirit was Gummadi Vittal Rao, better known

as Gaddar. A balladeer, his revolutionary songs were very popular among the people. It was said that when he sang, people felt “blood rushing to their head, pride welling in their hearts and anger rising in their breasts.”³⁴

The Naxalite violence in Andhra Pradesh showed a steady upward trend from 1981 to 1990, as the following figures show:³⁵

Year	Incidents	Killed
1981	53	10
1982	98	18
1983	172	17
1984	306	30
1985	308	30
1986	161	25
1987	252	63
1988	453	59
1989	456	84
1990	735	94

An incident involving the killing of seven policemen by the Naxalites in Adilabad district on 1 February 1989 marked a distinct upgrade in the weaponry and lethal capabilities of the PWG. They used AK-47 assault rifles for the first time and also remote-controlled mines to blow up the police jeep. After the carnage, they decamped with two stun guns, one self-loading rifle, three .303 rifles, and one .38 revolver. It is estimated that the PWG had acquired 50 to 60 AK-47 rifles from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

In due course, the PWG extended its tentacles to the adjoining areas of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa and made a dent even in the bordering districts of Karnataka and certain pockets of Tamilnadu.

Internal dissensions within the party together with well organized counterinsurgency operations undertaken by the state police, however, gradually led to a decline in the fortunes of the PWG. There was a split in the party with Kondapally Seetharamaiah being replaced by Mupalla Laxmana Rao Ganapathy as general secretary. The differences between them surfaced prominently at the Central Organizing Committee meeting in August 1991

and came to a head at the Party Plenum in October 1991. The state government's sustained pressure also took its toll. The PWG and its six front organizations were banned on 20 May 1992. Operations by the security forces resulted in as many as 248 Naxalites being liquidated and 3,434 party activists being arrested in 1992. The following year, another 141 Naxalites were put out of action. The arrest of Kondapally Seetharamaiah and other important leaders added to the discomfiture of the PWG. There was demoralization among the rank and file, and about 8,500 of them surrendered to the authorities. Naxalite violence registered a fall.

Bihar

At the beginning of 1980, there were three major Naxalite groups active in Bihar: MCC, CPI (ML) Liberation Group, and CPI (ML) Party Unity. The Bihar government, in its *Notes on Extremist Activities-Affected Areas* published in May 1982, conceded that as many as 47 out of a total of 857 blocks spread over 14 districts were affected by the Communist extremist movement.

The MCC was actually formed in 1975, and it gradually spread its influence over the Central Bihar districts. It had an armed wing known as *Lal Raksha Dal*. The MCC cadres were notorious for indulging in gruesome acts of violence. They killed eleven people including five women in village Darmia, district Aurangabad on 7 October 1986. This was followed by another massacre in Baghaura and Dalelchack villages, also in district Aurangabad on 29 May 1987, when the Yadav activists of the MCC slaughtered 42 Rajputs of the two villages. Another sordid incident happened in Bara village of Gaya district on 12 February 1992, when the party activists hacked 37 members of the land-owning Bhumihar families. Actually, these were caste clashes which were projected as class conflicts. What began as a fight for social and economic justice degenerated into inter-caste clashes in Bihar.³⁶

The MCC ran virtually a parallel judicial system in certain pockets. These were called *Jan Adalats*, or People's Courts. These kangaroo courts dispensed rough and ready justice, which could be barbaric. In one instance, the self style judge gave a cryptic verdict: *Cheh inch chota kar do* (shorten the accused by six inches—in other words, behead him). The MCC violence

touched a peak in 1990, when there were 167 incidents involving loss of 51 lives.

The CPI (ML) Liberation Group was founded by Vinod Mishra in December 1973. He believed that Charu Mazumdar had, toward the end, modified his formulations and accepted the need and importance of mass mobilization and mass organizations. The Group struck roots in Bhojpur and soon spread to the Rohtas, Patna, Jehanabad, and Nalanda districts of Central Bihar. In 1990, violent activities of the faction touched a high with 106 incidents in which 40 people were killed. The Party Congress held in Calcutta in 1992 resolved that henceforth it would function as a political outfit. It was stated that “the party does not rule out the possibility that under a set of exceptional national and international circumstances, the balance of social and political forces may even permit relatively peaceful transfer of central power to revolutionary forces.” It, however, added that the party “must prepare itself for winning the ultimate decisive victory in an armed revolution.”³⁷

The CPI (ML) Party Unity, formed in 1982, believed in a combination of underground and aboveground functioning. Its front organization among the peasants, The *Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti* (MKSS) headed by Dr. Vinyan, was active in seven districts of Central Bihar. The MKSS waged a relentless campaign for minimum wages and achieved a fair measure of success.

Maharashtra

Gadchiroli in Maharashtra, an area inhabited largely by members of tribal communities, also witnessed Naxalite activities. The district has an area of 15,434 square kilometers, 10,495 square kilometers of which were jungle. The entire life and culture of the community revolved around the forest and yet, tragically, the tribals were progressively denied access to the forests through a myopic interpretation of the rules. Several members cultivating a particular piece of land for years were evicted by the Forest Department under the Forest Conservation Act of 1980. The forest officials' contention was that the land came under the forest zone and as such was property of the Forest Department. The Naxalites exhorted the tribal community to stay on and continue with cultivation, promising them protection from any

action by the Forest Department. The tribals naturally looked upon them as the messiah.

The Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes recorded an interesting encounter which he had during his visit to Gadchiroli in 1989:

I was going in a jeep. I met a tribal on the way whom I gave lift in the jeep. In the course of conversation with him about the Naxals, whom the people here call *Dada* [bully], I asked him: 'How are the *Dadas*?' He said there is at least one change after the coming of *Dadas* - the government atrocities are over, now the police or the guard cannot harass us.³⁸

There were 113 incidents of Naxalite violence in 1990 involving 16 killings. The number of incidents came down to 96 in 1991, but the number of casualties shot up to 30. There was a particularly disastrous incident on 12 November 1991 in the Etapalli *tehsil* (subdivision) of Gadchiroli district when 10 Special Reserve Police Force (SRPF) personnel were killed and 13 other policemen injured in a landmine explosion.

Madhya Pradesh/Chhattisgarh

The tribal district of Bastar³⁹ provided a fertile ground to the Naxalites. As described by the People's Union for Civil Liberties in an illuminating report:

...a lopsided socio-economic development of the district, caused by indirect exploitation through environmental destruction and direct exploitation through cheating and duping, has provided an ideal setting for the Naxalites to take roots in the area. They probably understood the tribal psychology better and ...could easily win the confidence of the simple tribals.⁴⁰

The tribes, cut off from civilization, were used to a life of deprivation. If the teacher played truant, the tribals accepted it quietly. If the doctor did not turn up, there was no protest. It is in this kind of atmosphere that the Naxalites stepped into. They caught hold of the teacher and forced him to

teach classes. The doctor was threatened and he started attending to the patients. This gave credibility to the Naxalites, and the community looked at them with awe and respect.

Initially the Naxalites were active only in south Bastar, but gradually their influence spread to north Bastar as well. There were stray incidents of violence in the nature of threatening a block development officer who harassed the teachers, beating up a forest ranger who paid low wages to the forest workers, or making an errant constable apologize before the village assembly for his misdeeds. The forest contractors were compelled to increase the rate of *tendu* (a tobacco substitute) leaf collections from four rupees (Rs. 4) to Rs. 25 (approximately \$.08 to \$.54) over a period of eight years in the 1980s. The Naxalites also fought for tribal rights like allowing them to graze their cattle, permission to fell trees according to their need, and hunting small game in the forests. The Naxalite movement gradually spread over to the Balaghat and Rajnandgaon districts also. In 1990, there were 62 incidents of Naxalite violence.

The Naxalites of Bastar were opposed to the holding of elections. In the 1991 the Lok Sabha election, eight members of a polling party, including six policemen, were killed in a blast. In 1993, ten Central Reserve Police Force personnel were killed in a powerful landmine blast in the Narayanpur area of Bastar when they were returning after conclusion of the polling.

The Bastar area, which later became part of the Chhattisgarh state, over time became the hotbed of Naxalite activities in the country.

6. Maoism: The Dominant Strand

The third phase of the movement commenced at the beginning of the current century. The highlight of this phase was the transformation of the Naxalite movement into a predominantly Maoist movement with emphasis on militarization of the armed component of the party.

The PWG decided to set up a People's Guerrilla Army in December 2000 "to strengthen the political power of the people and to defeat the efforts of the State and the Central Governments to check the (revolutionary) movement."⁴¹ On the first anniversary of its formation in 2001, the outfit perpetrated acts of violence in different parts of Andhra Pradesh: it blew up the Heritage Milk chilling plant owned by Chandrababu Naidu's family, attacked a granite unit belonging to a union minister of state in Chittoor district, and targeted a Tata Tea unit and Coca-Cola manufacturing facility.

The CPI (ML) PWG however felt, as revealed in *Functioning of Military Commissions and Commands* circulated in 2002 that its guerrilla units were "quantitatively and qualitatively at a lower level" and that, therefore, it was necessary that they were raised to a higher level and transformed into a People's Liberation Army (PLA).⁴² For this purpose, it was decided to constitute central and state military commissions, which were entrusted with the task of raising the political and organizational level of the fighters and the party committees; enhancing the military skills, tactics, and discipline of the armed wing; developing improvised weaponry, intelligence, and communications; and coordinating the secondary and base forces with the main force.

The party was conscious of the fact that their poor quality of arms, yet emphasized that their men and comrades were politically conscious, and if used properly, could defeat their well-armed enemy. Regarding the conduct of military operations, it quoted the following observations of Zhu De:

How we are to fight depends on the weapons we possess, the kind of enemy before us, and the specific time and place. This means that a battle has to be planned and fought on the basis of our own equipment, the strength of the enemy, and the factors of time, terrain, and so on. This new method of conducting war is both practical and materialist.⁴³

In July 2003, the Andhra Pradesh State Committee directed its units to organize political struggles against state repression, target the Telugu Desam Party and Bharatiya Janata Party leadership at the village and *mandal* (division) levels, and launch attacks on the armed forces of the government.

Strategy and Tactics

The party came up with another comprehensive document on *Strategy & Tactics of The Indian Revolution* in September 2004.⁴⁴ The PWG had merged with the MCCI on 21 March 2004; this document was therefore issued on behalf of the CPI (Maoist), the name given to the new outfit. At the very outset, the party stated that:

The Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution should be formulated by creatively applying the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to the concrete conditions prevailing in our country. This means that the Strategy and Tactics should be evolved by basing on an objective class analysis of the Indian society; the character of the Indian State; the fundamental contradictions and the principal contradiction; and by taking into account the specific characteristics, the special features as well as the peculiarities of the Indian situation.⁴⁵

The document noted that the four major contradictions in the present day Indian society were the contradiction between imperialism and the Indian people, the contradiction between feudalism and the broad masses, the contradiction between capital and labor, and the internal contradictions among the ruling classes. The Indian Revolution was to be achieved in two stages: New Democratic Revolution in the first stage and Socialist Revolution in the second stage. The central task of the revolution was explained in the following words:

The central task of the Indian revolution also is the seizure of political power. To accomplish this central task, the Indian people will have to be organized in the people's army and will have to wipe out the armed forces of the counter-revolutionary Indian state through war and will have to establish, in its place, their own

state – the People's Democratic State and will have to establish their own political authority. The very act of establishment of the state machinery of the people by destroying, through war, the present autocratic state machinery – the army, the police, and the bureaucracy of the reactionary ruling classes – is the central task of the People's Democratic Revolution of India.⁴⁶

The document laid great stress on building a people's army:

We cannot conceive of people's war without a people's army. The importance of the people's army in the seizure of political power is captured in the well-known statement of Mao, 'Without a people's army the people have nothing.' The people's army is the instrument in the hands of the oppressed people to capture political power without which it is impossible to smash the state machinery of the exploiting classes. Therefore the effort of the party of the working class to build and develop a people's army will be of vital significance in the revolutionary movement following the line of Protracted People's War.⁴⁷

On the relationship between the party and the people's army, it relied on Mao's dictum that "the party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the party."⁴⁸

The PLGA, it was clarified, would have three types of forces:

1. Main Forces: These will be the platoons, companies, central/state special action teams which move anywhere to participate in the war under instructions of the commissions/commands. They will be better in terms of political consciousness, quality of arms and fighting skills.
2. Secondary Forces: These will be local guerrilla squads, special guerrilla squads, platoons and district/division level action teams who will operate in a specific area with a view to harass and tire the enemy forces.
3. Base Forces: These are people's militia which should have the capacity to harass the enemy forces continuously.

It was further said that to enhance the capacity of the PLGA, they would also develop the departments of communications, intelligence, supplies, ordinance, artillery, medical, and politico-military training. Besides, there would be special action teams “to annihilate the cruel officers belonging to the enemy forces.”⁴⁹

The protracted war, it was visualized, would pass through three stages: the first stage would be of guerrilla warfare; the second of mobile warfare, when the guiding principle would be “Fight when you can win, move away when you can’t;” and the third stage would be of positional warfare, which would be waged face to face with the enemy.⁵⁰

People’s support, the document emphasized, is absolutely essential for the success of the protracted war.

We must mobilize the people to support our armed forces enthusiastically and to fight the enemy together with them. The people are the eyes and ears of the army; they feed and keep our soldiers. It is they who help the army in sabotage and in battle. The people are the water and our army the fish.⁵¹

Violence on a High Trajectory

The militarization of the movement had a cascading impact on Naxal violence, as the following figures show:

Year	Incidents	Killed
2001	1,208	564
2002	1,465	482
2003	1,597	515
2004	1,533	566
2005	1,608	677
2006	1,509	678
2007	1,565	696
2008	1,591	721
2009	2,258	908
2010	2,213	1005
2011	1,745	606

The violent incidents perpetrated by the Maoists demonstrated their newly acquired skills as well as their confidence. The first such incident was the attempted assassination of Chandrababu Naidu, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, on 1 October 2003. The attack took place while the chief minister was travelling from Tirupati to Tirumala. The Naxals had planted claymore mines along the route, and these were triggered as soon as the motorcade reached the spot. The missiles hit the bulletproof car, which was hurled into the air and landed on the right side of the road. The chief minister suffered minor injuries while the minister and those accompanying him sustained serious injuries. A search of the area revealed that actually 17 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) had been planted, though only 9 exploded. The PWG claimed responsibility for the attack, saying they were trying to eliminate the chief minister, who they claimed had been perpetuating state-sponsored violence. Earlier, in March 2000, A. Madhav Reddy, the Panchayat Raj Minister, was killed in a similar blast at Ghatkesar near Hyderabad.⁵²

In 2004, there was a major incident in Koraput district of Orissa, when a contingent of about 300 Naxals attacked several government establishments including police stations, the district jail, the office of the superintendent of police, and decamped with about 1,000 weapons. The Naxals took the precaution of blocking the three main entry roads into Koraput town by puncturing the tires of passing trucks. They also laid mines on the Koraput-Kolab road to prevent the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the India Reserve Battalion personnel from reaching the town.

In 2005, the Maoists carried out a raid on Jehanabad district jail in Bihar. In a well coordinated operation, about 150-200 cadres of the CPI (Maoist), supported by about 800 sympathizers, attacked the district jail, residence of the district judge, district court, and police lines. They broke open the district jail, releasing 389 prisoners. The Maoists also abducted members of the Ranvir Sena incarcerated in the jail and executed at least nine of them. A large quantity of arms and ammunition was looted. The home minister subsequently claimed that 222 prisoners had been apprehended and brought back to the jail. The attack showed the meticulous planning of the Maoists and the local support they enjoyed.⁵³

In 2006, there was the first incident of a train being intercepted by the Naxals in the Latehar district of Jharkhand. The train was detained in a thick forest area under the cover of darkness while it was proceeding from

Barkakhana in Jharkhand to Mughalsarai in UP. However, no passenger was injured or abducted by the ultras, and the train was released the following morning. The Naxal action was in protest against the death of one of their self-styled commanders in an encounter with the police.

Party Congress

The CPI (Maoist) held its ninth congress from January to February 2007. It was attended by about 100 delegates from 16 different states. The Congress adopted five basic documents: *Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism–Leninism–Maoism*, the *Programme of the Party*, the *Constitution*, the *Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution*, and a *Political Resolution on the current international and domestic situation*. A new Central Committee was elected with Ganapathi as its general secretary.

The Congress summed up its political philosophy in the following words:

The Unity Congress reaffirmed the general line of the new democratic revolution with agrarian revolution as its axis and protracted people's war as the path of the Indian revolution that had first come into the agenda with the Naxalbari upsurge. It further enriched the politico-military line of the Party. It set several new tasks for the party with the main focus on establishment of base areas as the immediate, basic and central task before the entire party. It also resolved to advance the people's war throughout the country, further strengthen the people's army, deepen the mass base of the party and wage a broad-based militant mass movement against the neo-liberal policies of globalization, liberalization, privatization pursued by the reactionary ruling classes under the dictates of imperialism.⁵⁴

The party specifically expressed its resolve to advance "the people's war and turning the PLGA into PLA, guerrilla war into mobile war, and the guerrilla zones into base areas."⁵⁵

Maoist violence has since undergone a qualitative change. Small scale isolated incidents have been replaced by large scale, well organized attacks. The target is not so much the individual class enemy—it is now the state

itself. Political leaders are targeted. Security forces personnel in particular are attacked. Train service is disrupted. Communication towers are demolished. Development projects' implementation is interfered with.

There were major incidents in 2007: 55 people including 16 personnel of Chhattisgarh Armed Force and 39 Special Police Officers (SPOs) were killed in an attack on a police base camp at Rani Bodli village of Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh on 15 March; 19 people including the son of former Chief Minister Babu Lal Marandi were gunned down on 27 October while they were watching a cultural program in the Giridih district of Jharkhand; and on 29 November, 10 personnel of Mizoram Police were killed in a landmine explosion near Konta in the Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh.

The year 2008 continued to witness intensified Naxalite violence: the ultras attacked Nayagarh town in Orissa on 15 February and overran three police stations, killing 13 policemen and 2 civilians. They also decamped with 1,100 weapons, though police were able to recover about half of them; on 29 June, 35 security forces personnel belonging to the *Greyhounds* (elite anti-Naxal force) of Andhra Pradesh police were killed/drowned in an attack on a combined group of Andhra and Orissa police in the Chitrakonda



Figure 4. Central Reserve Police Force officials carry the coffins of Indian police officials who were killed during an ambush by Maoist guerrillas. Photo used by permission of Newscom.

reservoir of Malkangiri district, close to the Andhra border; and on 16 July, the Maoists killed 17 personnel of the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Orissa Police in a landmine blast in the Malkangiri district.

Maoist violence reached a peak in 2009 when, for the first time, the total number of incidents crossed the figure of 2000. In Bihar, on 9 February, in a surprise attack, the Maoists killed 10 policemen including personnel of the Special Auxiliary Police who were providing security at a function at Ravidas Ashram in the Mahuliatand village of Nawada district. The Maoists fled with the arms and ammunition of the slain policemen. In Chhattisgarh, they killed 30 policemen including a superintendent of police on 12 July in three attacks in Rajnandgaon district. In Jharkhand, Maoists beheaded the Special Branch Inspector Francis Indwar on 7 October. In Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, they killed 16 police personnel, including 5 female constables, in an encounter near the hills of Hatti Tola on 21 May. In Orissa, about 100 armed Maoists attacked the state-run National Aluminium Company Limited bauxite mine at Panchpatmali in Koraput district on April 12. In the encounter which followed, 11 Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel and 5 Maoists were killed.⁵⁶

The Maoist movement thus acquired the dimensions of a serious threat to the internal security of the Indian State.

7. Present Scenario

The Maoist (or left-wing extremism, as the government likes to call it) influence has gradually extended over large parts of the country. Addressing the police chiefs of the country on 15 September 2009, the prime minister said that “left-wing extremism is, perhaps, the gravest internal security threat our country faces.” The home minister, speaking at the same gathering, stated that various groups subscribing to the Maoist ideology had their pockets of influence in 20 states across the country, and that over 2,000 police station areas in 223 districts in these states were partially or substantially affected by the menace.⁵⁷ The CPI (Maoist), the home minister clarified, was the most potent of the Naxal groups with a presence in 17 states and contributing to 90 percent of the total Naxal violence. He also disclosed that recent decisions taken by the party’s politburo indicated that the CPI (Maoist) was determined to expand its activities to newer and intensify its mass resistance in the existing areas. Referring to the party’s tactics, its selection of targets, and search for allies, he said:

The CPI (Maoist) has also improved upon its military wares and operational tactics. Besides targeting the police, alleged police informers and so-called class enemies, it is laying greater emphasis on attacking economic and development infrastructure such as roads, bridges, railways, power and telecommunication networks. With increasing sophistication in fabrication and deployment of improvised explosive devices, it has inflicted more casualties on the security forces.

In a bid to expand its network and influence, the CPI (Maoist) has been seeking alliances with secessionist and terrorist elements in the country. It has been keenly seeking ideological resonance and tactical understanding with the northeast insurgents and has begun to lend support to their secessionist ideology and demands.⁵⁸

The salient features of the movement are as follows:

- Spread over a large geographical area

- Increase in potential for violence
- Unification of PWG and MCCI
- Plan to have a Red Corridor
- Nexus with other extremist groups

Geographical Spread. The movement which started from a small village in 1967 has spread over a vast swathe of the country during the last over 40 years. The states particularly affected are: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, UP, West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka, Haryana, and Tamilnadu. Even the prime minister acknowledged that the movement has “the support of a section of the tribal communities and poorest of the poor in many affected areas.”⁵⁹

Potential for Violence. The Naxals’ potential for violence has increased substantially with their acquisition of sophisticated weapons and expertise in the use of IEDs. The Naxals are said to be in possession of at least 8,000 regular weapons including AK-47 rifles and self-loading rifles. They have built this arsenal essentially by looting weapons from landlords/policemen, purchasing them from smugglers, acquiring from insurgent groups like the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Issac-Muivah group) (NSCN-IM) and United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), and also obtaining some weapons from Nepal. The armed wing of the Naxals is about 10,000 strong.⁶⁰

Unification. The movement got a tremendous boost when its two major components, the PWG and the MCCI, merged on 21 March 2004. The unified party is called the CPI (Maoist). The merger, apart from augmenting the support base of the party, gave it the character of a pan-India revolutionary movement.

Red Corridor. The Maoists plan to have a Compact Revolutionary Zone stretching from the Indo-Nepal border to the Dandakaranya Region in the south, from Pashupatinath in Nepal to Tirupati in Tamilnadu.

Nexus. The Maoists’ nexus with the other extremist organizations has added to the complexity of the problem. The PWG cadres received training in the handling of weapons and IEDs from LTTE members. Besides, they have

entente cordiale with the NSCN-IM and also with Manipur's People's Liberation Army. Some batches of Naxals received arms training from the ULFA. Besides, the CPI (Maoist) has fraternal relations with the Communist Party of Nepal.

According to a recent report, Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence agency is trying to reach out to the Maoists.⁶¹ The Lashkar-e-Toiba had directed its operative, Mohammed Umer Madani, to recruit Maoists and help them with money and firearms. Madani admitted to the police that his plan included giving preliminary training to the jihadis recruited from different parts of India in Maoist strongholds and then sending them to Pakistan for further training.

Some other features which are becoming noticeable are also matters of concern. These include:

- Organizing of *bandhs* (strikes) now and then to disrupt normal life on various pretexts.
- Giving call for the boycott of elections whenever the democratic exercise is held, and carrying out their *diktat* by acts of violence against the polling personnel or those exercising their right of franchise.
- Preventing the execution of development projects.
- Holding *Jan Adalats* to dispense instant justice.
- Encouraging the cultivation of opium in their areas of influence, particularly in Bihar and Jharkhand, to build up their finances with drug money.

Chhattisgarh is the worst Maoist-affected state in the country today. The state government launched Operation Green Hunt to dislodge Maoists from their areas of influence, but the Maoists continue to inflict heavy casualties. They killed 75 CRPF personnel in one single incident in Dantewada district on 6 April 2010.⁶² Jharkhand is the second most affected state. Naxalism has flourished in the state essentially because of corruption at the highest level. Bihar is in bad shape because the political leadership is unwilling to confront the problem head on. In Orissa, a lackadaisical administration has enabled the Maoists spread their wings. In Maharashtra, Gadchiroli district is badly affected. In West Bengal, the Marxist government blew hot and cold in tackling the Maoists. Andhra Pradesh is the only state where Maoists have been in retreat. Effective governance in the rural areas and

counterinsurgency operations by the *Greyhounds* has compelled the Maoists to withdraw from their strongholds in the state.

The incidents and casualties in the aforesaid states during the last three years have been as follows:

States	2009		2010		2011	
	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths
Andhra Pradesh	66	18	100	24	54	9
Bihar	232	72	307	97	314	62
Chhattisgarh	529	290	625	343	465	204
Jharkhand	742	208	501	157	517	182
Maharashtra	154	93	94	45	109	54
Orissa	266	67	218	79	192	53
West Bengal	255	158	350	258	90	41
Other States	14	2	18	2	14	1
Total	2258	908	2213	1005	1755	606

(Source: Ministry of Home, Government of India)

Maoist Mayhem

Some of the major incidents in the states worst affected during the last nearly two years are summarized in the following tables.⁶³

Bihar

2010

17 Feb.	At least 12 villagers, including three women and one child, were killed when nearly 150 armed cadres of the CPI (Maoist) attacked Phulwariya village in Jamui district. Those killed were Kora tribals and the attack was in retaliation to the alleged killing of eight Maoist by the Koras on 31 January. Maoists also set 30 houses on fire.
22 Mar.	CPI Maoists cadres triggered an explosion on the railway track between Kasta and Paraiya stations in Gaya district, resulting in the derailment of seven coaches and the engine of the Bhubaneswar-New Delhi Rajdhani Express. There were no casualties.
29 Aug.	Maoists killed seven security forces personnel in the forests of Ghoghraghata Kanimoh in Lakhisarai district. They also abducted four policemen; one of them, Lukas Tete, was killed while the remaining three were subsequently released on 6 September.

2011

13 March	Six cadres of the CPI-Maoist were killed and eight others arrested following an encounter between the security forces and the Maoists in Dharmaha village under the Kalyanpur police station in East Champaran district. Security forces also recovered 14 weapons besides explosives and ammunition from the spot.
15 May	As the voting for the ninth phase of Bihar Panchayat polls began, two polling officials were killed and two critically injured in a landmine blast triggered by the cadres of the CPI-Maoist in Jamui District.
16 June	A contingent of 40-50 armed Maoists attacked the Nadaul railway station and set ablaze part of the railway station in the Jehanabad district on the Patna-Gaya route, disrupting rail traffic.

2012

7-8 Feb.	In a massive joint combing operation in the Jamui Hills area, the security forces neutralized three CPI-Maoist bunkers, and recovered nearly two tons of explosives and a huge quantity of arms and ammunition (13 rifles, 500 detonators, and hundreds of IEDs) from Narkol village and adjoining areas under Barhat Police Station in Jamui District.
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Chhattisgarh

2010

6 April	Seventy-five CRPF personnel and one policeman were killed in an attack by about 1,000 CPI (Maoist) armed cadres in Dantewada district. The attack was launched to mark the centenary of the Bhumkal adivasi rebellion and also to register protest over Operation Green Hunt. Maoists also lost eight men in the engagement.
17 May	Maoists blew up a bus near Sukma in Dantewada district, killing 44 people including 28 civilians and 16 SPOs.
29 Jun.	Twenty-seven personnel of CRPF including an Assistant Commandant were killed in an ambush in Narayanpur district. Maoists also lost two platoon commanders and one section commander.
29 Aug.	Three Border Security Force (BSF) troopers, a constable of the Chhattisgarh police, and one SPO were killed in an ambush at Bhuski in Kanker district. The Maoists also carried away five weapons including one light machine gun and two AK-47 rifles.
23 Nov.	In a fierce encounter with the CRPF in the Jagargunda area of Dantewada district, 20 cadres of the CPI (Maoist) were killed.

2011

14 March	The police claimed to have killed 30 CPI (Maoist) cadres in an encounter in Dantewada District during an ambush in which three policemen also lost their lives.
10 June	The CPI (Maoist) cadres blew up an anti-landmine vehicle, killing 10 security forces personnel—seven SPOs and three police constables—and injuring three others at a bridge near Gatan village in the Katekalyan area in Dantewada District.
21 Oct.	Six policemen were killed and five others injured in a landmine blast and ambush by the CPI (Maoist) cadres in Bastar District. The 16-member police team were riding on eight motorcycles. At least three Maoists were also killed in retaliatory firing by the police.
16 Nov.	Two troopers of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) were killed as CPI (Maoist) cadres attacked the mining facility of the National Mineral Development Corporation in Dantewada district.
19 Dec.	CPI (Maoist) cadres fired upon an Indian Air Force helicopter which had been sent to help the security forces' operation in Dantewada district.

2012

25 Feb.	The Maoists buried alive a head of village council at Kosnar under Gangalur Police limits in Bijapur district for guiding a team of State Government officials to his village for the enumeration of farmers.
14 March	Three BSF troopers were killed and four others injured when CPI (Maoist) cadres blew up their vehicle as they were traveling in Kanker district.



Figure 5. District of Chhattisgarh. Map used by permission of Maps of India.

Jharkhand

2009

17 Jan.	Six policemen were killed in a landmine blast triggered by suspected CPI (Maoist) cadres in the Latehar District.
11 April	Five CRPF personnel were killed and three others injured when Maoist cadres opened fire on them inside Jalko forest under Arki police station in Khunti district.
10 June	Eleven policemen including a CRPF inspector were killed and six others injured when Maoist cadres triggered a landmine explosion targeting their vehicle in West Singhbhum district.
12 June	At least 13 security forces personnel were killed in two separate attacks by the Maoist cadres in Bokaro district. Their attempt to loot the State Bank of India branch was however foiled.
7 Oct.	Maoists beheaded Special Branch Inspector Francis Indwar, and threw his body on a slip road leading to a highway that connects Patna to Jamshedpur. The inspector was being held hostage for a swap with arrested Maoist leaders Kobad Ghandy, Chhatradhar Mahto, and Chandrabhushan Yadav.

2010

13 Feb.	Maoists abducted a block development officer from Dalbhumgarh village in East Jharkhand. He was later released.
16 July	Five police personnel of Jharkhand Jaguar Force were killed in a landmine explosion at Kutmu More in Latehar district.
25-26 Sep.	In an encounter in the Saranda forest of West Singhbhum district, three security forces personnel and seven Maoists were killed. Security forces neutralized the Maoists' training camp at Nurda and recovered some weapons.

2011

28 January	Nine cadres of the CPI (Maoist) were killed in an encounter with security forces in Luhur forest in Latehar District.
6 April	Manoj Ojha, general manager of Reliance Power, was killed and seven other company officials were injured in an attack by the cadres of a breakaway faction of the CPI (Maoist), near Hesatu village in Chatra District,
3 May	Eleven security forces personnel were killed and nearly 40 injured when CPI (Maoist) cadres set off landmines in an ambush in Lohardaga district.
6 June	The CPI (Maoist) cadres used earthmovers to destroy a government high school building in Chatra district.
26-29 June	Three CPI-Maoist camps were neutralized during the three-day operation that was launched in Saranda forest in West Singhbhum district. Seventeen suspected Naxalites, including four women, were detained and over 200 kilograms of explosives seized in the operation.
3-4 Dec.	Eleven persons, including ten policemen, were killed when CPI (Maoist) cadres attacked the convoy of member of parliament and former Jharkhand speaker, Inder Singh Namdhari, in Latehar district.

2012

3 January	The CPI (Maoist) cadres beheaded one youth, identified as Sukhram Munda, at Gamaria Raja Bazaar (market) under the Adki police station limits in Khunti district, accusing him of being a police informer.
5 March	Two suspected cadres of the CPI (Maoist) were killed and a CISF officer injured in an encounter in the Central Coal Fields' Ashok project, close to the Pipawar police station in Chatra district. Two rifles, two hand grenades, two IEDs, two walkie-talkies, and cartridges were recovered from the spot.



Figure 6. District of Jharkhand. Map used by permission of Maps of India.

Maharashtra

2010

27 May	Two police constables were killed by the Maoists outside Delanguda village in Gadchiroli district.
4 Oct.	Eight security forces personnel were killed in a landmine blast triggered by the Maoists in the Talewada jungle of Gadchiroli district.
8 Oct.	Three Indo-Tibetan Border Police personnel lost their lives when their jeep was blown up by the Maoists in the Sawargaon forest of Gadchiroli district. In the encounter which followed, school children were caught in the cross-fire; two of them were killed and twelve others suffered injuries.
21 Dec.	Four policemen were killed and seven others injured in a landmine blast triggered by the CPI (Maoist) in Gadchiroli district.

2011

19 May	Four police personnel, including two SPOs, and over 20 CPI (Maoist) cadres were killed in two different encounters in Gadchiroli district
20 Aug.	One havildar of State Police and two troopers of the Commando Battalions for Resolute Action were killed when cadres of the CPI (Maoist) fired at a patrolling party in the Makadchuha village in Gadchiroli district. One woman, Maoist <i>dalam</i> commander of the Chatgaon <i>dalam</i> , was killed in the retaliatory firing.

2012

27 March	Twelve CRPF personnel were killed and 28 others injured when Maoists triggered a landmine blast near Pastola village in Dhanora taluka of Gadchiroli district. The force personnel were taking medicine, food, and clothes for women and children in the remote villages.
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Orissa

2010

4 April	Eleven personnel of the SOG were killed and eight others seriously injured when Maoists triggered a landmine blast targeting a mini bus carrying the SOG personnel at Tanginiguda in Koraput district.
4 Nov.	Four cadres of the CPI (Maoist) were killed in a gun battle with the police in Malkangiri district. Some weapons and Maoist banners were seized from the spot.
2 Dec.	CPI (Maoist) cadres hacked three villagers to death near Rourkela in Sundargarh district, suspecting them to be police informers.

2011

9 Jan.	Nine cadres of the CPI (Maoist), including four women, were killed in an encounter with the District Voluntary Force and D-CAT, a special team of Rayagada Police in Rayagada District.
23 May	Nine policemen were killed in a landmine blast triggered by the CPI (Maoist) in Sunabeda forest in Nuapada district.
24 Sept.	Suspected cadres of the CPI (Maoist) killed Jagabandhu Majhi, a Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MLA representing the Umerkote assembly constituency and his personal security officer Prasanta Kumar Patra at Gonahatapadar village under the Raighar police station in Nabarangpur district.

2012

10 Feb.	Four personnel of the BSF including a Commandant were killed in an ambush by the cadres of the CPI (Maoist) in Malkangiri district. Two other BSF personnel and two officials of the Irrigation Department were also injured in the attack.
11 March	A telephone exchange and a mobile communication tower of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited were set ablaze by a group of around six to seven armed CPI (Maoist) cadres at Onakadelli under the Macchkund police station limits in Koraput district.
17 March	Two Italian tourists, Bosusco Paolo and Claudio Colangelo, who were on a trekking tour on the Ganjam-Kandhamal border, were abducted by the Maoists.
24 March	Maoists abducted a ruling BJD MLA, Jhina Hikaka, near Laxmipur in South Orissa while he was returning home from Koraput.

West Bengal

2010

15 Feb.	Twenty-five security forces personnel belonging to the Eastern Frontier Rifles were killed when a large group of Maoists attacked their camp at Silda in West Midnapore. Maoists, who also suffered five casualties, looted firearms and set the camp ablaze before leaving.
28 May	Maoists blasted the railway track between the Khemasoli and Sardiya stations near Jhargram in West Midnapore district, resulting in the derailment of 13 coaches of the Gyaneshwari Express and leading to the death of 148 passengers. Maoist-backed People's Committee against Police Atrocities (PCPA) claimed responsibility for the derailment.
27 Aug.	Umankant Mahato, a PCPA cadre and the prime suspect in the Gyaneshwari Express sabotage case, was killed in an encounter with the security forces.
2 Sep.	The Maoists observed a 24-hour shutdown in West Midnapore, Purulia and Bankura districts, demanding withdrawal of security forces from the region.
mid-Dec.	CPI (Maoist) posters were found in the Writers Building, the State Secretariat, calling for the withdrawal of security forces from Junglemahal area.

2011

14 Nov.	Two cadres of the CPI (Maoist) were killed and two security forces personnel of the 10th Naga Battalion seriously injured when they ambushed a Maoist group of about 15 persons who were fleeing Ghatbera after killing two Trinamool Congress supporters in the Balrampur area of Purulia district.
24 Nov.	The CPI (Maoist) politburo member, Mallojula Koteswar Rao alias Kishanji, the man who controlled Maoist operations in eastern India, was cornered and killed in a massive security operation after a two-hour gun battle in Kushaboni forest in Jhargram on the West Bengal-Jharkhand border in West Midnapore district.

Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram conceded that the challenge of left-wing extremism had been “underestimated” for several years, allowing the Maoists to spread their wings.⁶⁴

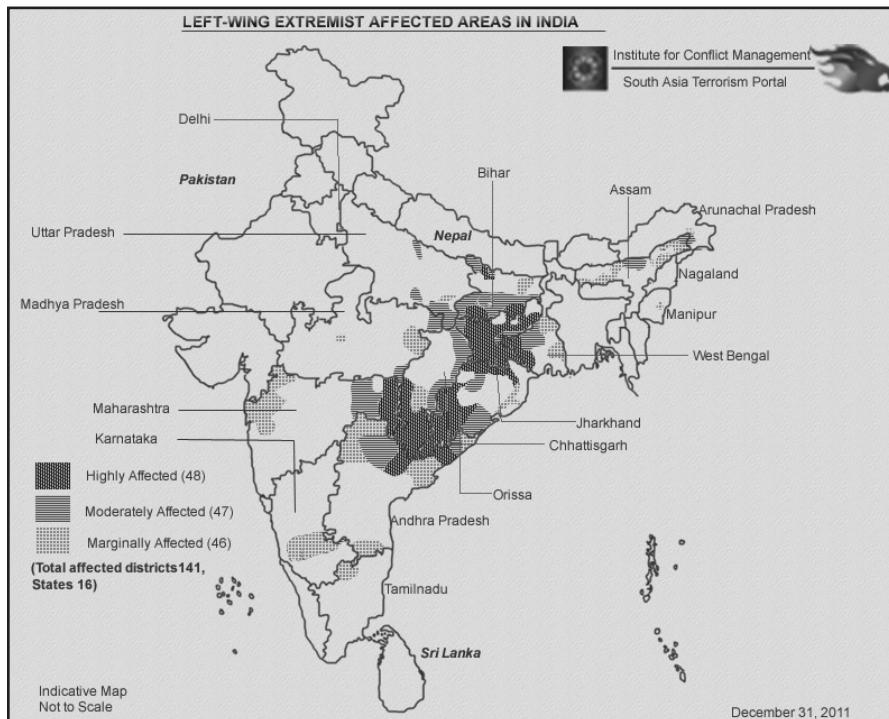


Figure 7. Left-wing extremist areas of India. Map used with permission of Institute for Conflict Management.⁶⁵

Disrupting the Economy

In pursuance of their opposition to India's economic policies, the Maoists have been attacking the public and private sector industries, particularly the railways, communications, power, and mining.

The railway minister, speaking in the parliament on 20 August 2010, admitted that the railways had suffered a loss of nearly Rs. 1,000 crore (more than \$188 million) during the last four to five years as a result of disruptions in the movement of trains caused by calls for *bandh* (general shut down) given by the Maoists from time to time and also due to the planned attacks on the railways. It is estimated that there were no less than 75 *bandhs* called



Figure 8. Trains are a favorite target of Maoists. Photo used by permission of Newscom.

by the Maoists, which led to 217 disruptions in the movement of trains and cancellation of 416 trains.

Telephone exchange towers are targeted because better communication facilities assist the security forces: 67 of these were damaged during 2009, 45 in 2010, and 51 in 2011.

The power sector has also been badly hit. The Maoists blew up three 132 kilovolt-ampere high tension towers in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh on 31 May 2007, which plunged six districts into complete darkness for about a week. Two power plants were damaged in 2009 and three in 2010.

The mining industry, particularly in the states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Orissa, has suffered extensively due to Maoist violence. The extremists allege that the government is not compensating the inhabitants of these areas and is callous about the plight of people who are displaced. The Bailadila mines in the Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh have been repeatedly targeted. On 12 April 2009, eleven CISF personnel and five Maoists were killed in an encounter following an attack on the armory and the bauxite mine of the public sector National Aluminium Company Limited in Koraput district of Orissa. Arcelor Mittal's \$9 billion steel projects in Jharkhand and Orissa and the South Korean company POSCO's \$32 billion

steel project in the Jagatsinghpur district of Orissa have suffered serious setbacks due to Maoist violence.

School buildings are targeted because these are occasionally used by the security forces for camping in interior areas where no shelter facilities are available. About 205 school buildings were damaged or destroyed by the Maoists from 2007-2012.

The repeated calls for *bandh* given by the Maoists in different parts of the affected states mean serious disruption of public life. According to one estimate, there were only 6 calls for *bandh* in 2006, but their number steadily increased to 11 in 2007, 13 in 2008, and 58 in 2009.⁶⁶

The Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has expressed concern over this trend and expressed its apprehension that, unless checked, it could seriously affect India's growth as an economic power.

Extra-territorial Links

China's *People's Daily* hailed the events in Naxalbari and commented, in its editorial of 5 July 1967, that "the revolutionary group of the Indian Communist Party have thrown off the shackles of modern revisionism and smashed the *trammels* that bound them."⁶⁷ Subsequently, the formation of the CPI (ML) in 1969 was also welcomed by the Chinese Communist Party, which published the party's political resolution in *People's Daily*. Beijing Radio welcomed the uprising. Recognition also came from the Marxist-Leninist groups of other countries like the United Kingdom, Albania, and Sri Lanka. In due course, the CPI (ML) developed a close nexus with these parties and also with the Marxist-Leninist groups of other countries like Australia, U.S., Canada, Cuba, Indonesia, Italy, Nepal, and East Pakistan.

The Chinese extended financial assistance and supplied propaganda literature to the Naxalites. They also directed the Naga rebels to provide some arms and ammunition out of the consignment they had received from China. The Naga rebels are thought to have given one light machinegun and ten rifles to the Naxalites of Assam. The Communist Party of Great Britain remitted 1,000 pounds to the party's central committee. The CPI (ML) functioned as a contingent of the international Communist movement.

The extra-territorial links of the party weakened after the death of Charu Mazumdar and the subsequent fragmentation of the party. Marxism-

Leninism nevertheless continued to be quoted, and Mao remained the source of inspiration. A significant development in this direction was the formation of Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organizations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA) in June 2001 “to unify and co-ordinate the activities of the Maoist parties and organization in South Asia to confront this developing situation by spreading protracted people’s war in the region, in the context of hastening and advancing the world proletarian socialist revolution.” The joint declaration was signed by the Marxist-Leninist parties of Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and India.⁶⁸ The CCOMPOSA, through a declaration adopted in August 2002, enunciated the following principles to achieve unity of the Maoist parties and organizations of South Asia:

- Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to be the scientific ideology of the constituent units
- New Democratic Revolution shall be the goal
- Revisionism of all shades to be opposed
- Solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles throughout the world
- A broad front with the ongoing armed struggles of the various nationality movements in the subcontinent
- Journals/periodicals to be brought out as instruments of propaganda

The third conference of CCOMPOSA held on 19 March 2004 was attended by Marxist-Leninist groups from Bangladesh, Nepal, and India; the Indian groups included CPI (ML) PWG, CPI (ML) Naxalbari, Revolutionary Communist Center of India, and the MCCI. The conference, in its political resolution, observed that “in South Asia, powerful people’s wars under Maoist leadership are developing in Nepal, India, and to some extent Bangladesh,” and stressed the “necessity to preserve, develop, and extend these people’s wars in the entire region and initiate new ones.”

The CPI (ML) PWG, the Communist Party of Philippines, and the Communist Party of Turkey (Marxist-Leninist), in a joint statement on 20 March 2003, condemned the U.S. war in Iraq and said that their struggle against imperialism was inseparable from the general class struggle.

The merger of the PWG and MCCI on 14 October 2004 was followed by a declaration that the unified party would support people’s wars led by Maoist parties in other countries including the Philippines, Peru, and Turkey.

Replying to a question in the parliament in March 2012, the minister of state in the Ministry of Home Affairs stated that the Maoist movement had drawn support from several organizations located in Germany, France, Holland, Turkey, and Italy. Besides, the Maoist groups had participated in conferences and seminars conducted in Belgium and Germany. He also said that the CPI (Maoist) party has “close links” with Maoist organizations in Philippines and Turkey.⁶⁹

8. State Response

The state response to the Naxal challenge has fluctuated from one extreme to the other depending upon the political perception of the party in power.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi came down heavily on the Naxalites. It was during her tenure that Operation Steeplechase was carried out in 1971 in the bordering districts of West Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. The operation shattered the Naxal ranks. Most of the top Naxalite leaders including Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santhal, Nagabhushanam Patnaik, Ashim Chatterjee, and a host of others were arrested by the police. Naxalites in large numbers were put behind bars: about 1,400 in Andhra Pradesh, 2,000 in Bihar, 4,000 in Bengal, and 1,000 in Kerala, UP, and elsewhere. The imposition of Emergency in 1975 led to the banning of almost all the Naxalite groups in the country. Later, after Morarji Desai became the prime minister in 1977, the state governments were directed to release the Naxalites held in detention.

The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, N.T. Rama Rao, speaking in 1983, described the Naxalites as *Desabhaktulu* (patriots). Subsequently, the compulsions of office forced him to take a tough line. Another Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Chenna Reddy, started with a very liberal policy in 1989. He freed all the Naxalite prisoners who had undergone long spells of incarceration without trial or conviction, allowed freedom to the extremists to hold public meetings, and placed restraints on police action against the Naxalites. The Naxalites, however, took advantage of this approach to swell their ranks, enhance their arsenal, and commit extortion in a big way. The chief minister was thereafter compelled to adopt a hard line.

The Congress-led United Progressive Alliance, which was voted to power at the center in 2004, showed a lack of clarity in dealing with the Maoist challenge. Shivraj Patil, the Home Minister, in a statement made on 24 April 2005, said:

The Government is not interested in using weapons. They are our brothers and sisters and we know that this is a socio-economic problem rather than one of law and order. We can solve this problem through dialogue and discussions. Whatever the political difficulties, force should be used only if nothing else works and only

to protect innocents. Let us deal with Naxalism as a socio-economic problem, not a law and order problem.⁷⁰

The Naxals took full advantage of this “brothers and sisters” approach to augment their strength.

Administrative Measures

At the administrative level, however, a number of initiatives were taken by the government.⁷¹ These were, briefly, as follows:

- a. Security-related expenditure scheme (SRE) – The SRE scheme envisages reimbursing the expenditure incurred by the states on ex-gratia payment to civilians and security personnel killed by Naxals, purchase of ammunition, training of state police forces, upgrade of police posts, publicity material, et cetera. Guidelines were also issued under the scheme for the surrender and rehabilitation of left-wing extremists to encourage the surrender of extremists who abjure violence and return to the mainstream.
- b. Infrastructure in Naxal-affected areas – A new scheme for Special Infrastructure in left-wing extremism-affected states was approved in the Eleventh Plan with an allocation of Rs. 500 crore (more than \$94 million) to cater to critical infrastructure gaps which could not be covered under the normal provisions of various existing schemes. These would relate to requirements of mobility for the police/security forces by upgrading the existing roads/tracks in inaccessible areas, providing secure camping grounds and helipads, and undertaking measures to enhance the security of police stations/outposts in vulnerable areas.
- c. Strengthening of law enforcement – The states were asked to augment their police strength and particularly fill up the existing vacancies. The Government of India also released funds under the Police Modernization Scheme to the states to upgrade their police forces in terms of weaponry, communication equipment, and other infrastructure. India Reserve battalions were raised to reinforce the security apparatus in the states, and the strength of the CRPF was augmented. It

was also decided to set up 20 counterinsurgency and anti-terrorism schools in the Naxal-affected states.

- d. Central paramilitary forces were deployed to assist the state forces in anti-Naxal operations. Besides, it was decided to raise 10 Commando Battalions for Resolute Action trained in guerrilla warfare techniques and locate them in Naxal-affected states.

A number of review and monitoring mechanisms were also set up to ensure that the different schemes are implemented properly.⁷² These are:

- a. Standing Committee of Chief Ministers – It is presided over by the home minister and comprises chief ministers of the affected states. The committee monitors the spread of Naxalism and evolves effective strategies to deal with the problem.
- b. High-level Task Force – It is placed under the cabinet secretary with the aim of promoting coordinated efforts across a range of development and security measures.
- c. Coordination Center – It is headed by the union home secretary with chief secretaries and directors general of police of Naxal-affected states as its members. It reviews and coordinates the steps taken by the states to contain Maoist activities.
- d. Task Force under Special Secretary (Internal Security) – It includes senior officers from the intelligence agencies, central paramilitary forces, and the state police to decide on the operational steps needed to deal with left-wing extremism and bring about coordination between the authorities of different states.
- e. Inter-Ministerial Group – It is headed by the additional secretary (Naxal Management) in the Ministry of Home Affairs with officers from development ministries and Planning Commission to oversee the implementation of development schemes in the left-wing extremism affected areas for accelerated socioeconomic development.

Government Policy

The Government of India enunciated a 14-point policy in 2006 to deal with the Naxal problem.⁷³ The salient features of the policy were:

1. deal sternly with the Naxals indulging in violence
2. address the problem simultaneously on political, security, and development fronts in a holistic manner
3. ensure inter-state coordination in dealing with the problem
4. improve police response and pursue effective and sustained police action
5. no peace dialogue unless the Naxals agree to give up arms and violence
6. political parties must strengthen their cadre base in affected areas
7. focus on faster socioeconomic development of the backward areas
8. promote voluntary local resistance groups
9. highlight the futility of Naxal ideology and violence through mass media
10. post willing, committed, and competent officers in affected districts
11. have an effective surrender and rehabilitation policy for Naxalites
12. accord high priority to distribution of land to landless, development of infrastructure, and employment opportunities to the youth
13. ensure uninterrupted economic development in affected areas
14. supplement the efforts and resources of the affected states on both security and development fronts

The plan, however, never took off. The Union Home Minister Shiv Raj Patil, had an idealistic approach to tackling the Naxals, who were given a long rope. The development schemes, on the other hand, remained a paper exercise.

The Maoists took full advantage of this approach to expand their territorial influence across the subcontinent and strengthen their organization. The terrorist attack in Mumbai on 26 November 2008 led to Patil's resignation and installation of P.C. Chidambaram as the new home minister. Chidambaram said at the very outset that the gravity of the problem had been underestimated in the past, and he formulated a new strategy to deal with the Maoist threat to the Indian State.

The new home minister summarized the government's new response in 2009 with three graphic words: *clear, hold and develop*. It implied a three-stage strategy. In the first phase, the Naxals would be drained out of their swamps by undertaking well coordinated counterinsurgency operations

against them. In the second phase, the civil administration would be established in the areas cleared. And, in the third phase, economic development would be undertaken on a priority basis in these regions. An official explained the idea is to “dominate” then develop quickly while considering the people’s basic needs. The Union Government deployed central para-military forces in the worst affected districts toward the end of 2009 and comprehensive operations began in early 2010.

The progress in clearing the areas, however, has been slow due to a number of factors.⁷⁴ Some chief ministers have reservations about the federal government approach. The chief minister of Bihar, speaking on 14 July 2010, said that enforcement action alone would lead to greater alienation of such elements “making heroes out of the leaders of the extremist organizations and leading to only symptomatic treatment, leaving the underlying disease to reappear in a more virulent form.”⁷⁵ Besides, some allies of the government like Mamta Banerjee’s Trinamool Congress, have been maintaining an ambivalent attitude towards the Maoists. There is also inadequate coordination between the central and the state forces. This was particularly



Figure 9. Crater caused by landmine blast in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh. Photo used by permission of Newscom.

noticed in Chhattisgarh, which is the worst affected by Maoist violence. Coordination among the states also leaves much to be desired.

The union home minister, while addressing a meeting of the chief ministers on internal security, on 14 July 2010, further refined the government policy of dealing with the problem of left-wing extremism. He laid stress on providing helicopters for logistic support, troop movement, supplies, and evacuation; funding the establishment/strengthening of 400 police stations in the affected districts at the rate of Rs. 2 crore (more than \$375,000) per police station; sanctioning additional SPOs to the states; setting up Unified Command in the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, and West Bengal; constituting an empowered group to modify the existing norms/guidelines of various development schemes having regard to the local needs and conditions in the affected districts; advising the state governments to implement Panchayats Extension of the Scheduled Areas Act strictly; improving the road connectivity in 34 districts most affected by left-wing extremism; and asking the Planning Commission to prepare a special development plan for the affected districts/states with emphasis on road connectivity, primary education, primary health care, and drinking water.

On 25 November 2010, the government announced an Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for 60 selected tribal and backward districts including 48 districts affected by left-wing extremism. All these districts were given a block grant of Rs. 25 crore (approximately \$4.7 million) for 2010-11 and another Rs. 30 crore (more than \$5.6 million) district for 2011-12. A committee headed by the district collector and comprising the superintendent of police and a district forest officer was made responsible for implementation of the scheme. It was clarified that the committee would draw up a plan with concrete proposals to improve the infrastructure and services such as school buildings, primary health centers, district water supply, village roads, electricity in public places, et cetera. The expenditure on these projects would be over and above the expenditure being incurred under the existing central/state government schemes.

Addressing Economic Issues

The Government of India has been conscious of the need to press the accelerator on the economic front. It has, therefore, undertaken a number of

projects which, if properly implemented, would take the wind out of the sails of the Maoists. Three initiatives in this regard deserve special mention.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2006. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is the flagship program of the Government of India which aims at enhancing the livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. It is the largest ever employment program visualized in human history and holds out the “prospect of transforming the livelihoods of the poorest and heralding a revolution in rural governance in India.”⁷⁶

However, as brought out in the Comptroller and Auditor General report,⁷⁷ there are “significant deficiencies” in the implementation of the scheme. The rural development minister himself, while addressing a workshop on NREGA, deplored that “job cards are not reaching beneficiaries, *sarpanches* (heads of village council) are supposed to make plans but that is not happening and funds for material components are not being used properly.”⁷⁸ The Center for Environment and Food Security, which carried out a rapid survey in the 50 poorest villages of Bundelkhand region of UP in the last quarter of 2009, found “large numbers of very poor *dalit* (scheduled caste) households who have not received even a single day of NREGA work in the last four years or received it only for a few days.” They also detected “massive corruption and very serious irregularities in the implementation of the rural job scheme.”⁷⁹ The Supreme Court of India also expressed concern over implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA and said that funds allocated for the project either remained unutilized or were, in many cases, not reaching the real beneficiaries and going to wrong hands.⁸⁰

On completion of four years of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA,⁸¹ the government acknowledged on 2 February 2010 that there had been “lapses” in implementation of the scheme. The prime minister nevertheless maintained that the scheme had reduced the impact of drought conditions and the global meltdown.⁸²

Forest Rights Act, 2006. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act of 2006, (popularly known as the Forest Rights Act) is a significant step in recognizing and vesting the forest rights of scheduled

tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in such forests for generations, but whose rights could not be recorded. It provides the framework for recording the forest rights so vested. The act accepted December 2005 as the cut-off date for consideration of the land rights and also brought the non-tribal forest dwellers within its ambit. Thus, all those residing in forests for 25 years or more or for three generations prior to 2005 were eligible to claim land, and the ceiling was set as four hectares (one hectare equals approximately 2.5 acres) for each settler family. According to a government handout, more than 23.27 *lakh* (one hundred thousand) claims have already been filed and more than 3.48 *lakh* titles distributed.

The act, however, is being vehemently opposed by the wildlife conservation lobbyists who fear that the law will make it impossible to create “inviolate spaces” or areas free from human presence for the purpose of wildlife conservation. Tiger conservation in particular could be affected. Corporate groups are also against the act because they think that henceforth it would be difficult to displace tribals for any industrial projects. The implementation of the Forest Rights Act recently got a boost when a committee headed by N.C. Saxena, member of the National Advisory Council, recommended that the corporate group Vedanta should not be allowed to mine in the hills of Niyamgiri (Orissa) which are the abode of the Dongaria Kondh and Kutia Kondh tribes. The committee expressed its firm view that “allowing mining in the proposed mining lease area by depriving two primitive tribal groups of their rights over the proposed mining site in order to benefit a private company would shake the faith of tribal people in the laws of the land which may have serious consequences for the security and well being of the entire country.”⁸³ Interestingly, these tribes have been likened to the Na’vi, the blue-skinned, nature-loving aliens massacred by greedy humans in the 2009 movie *Avatar*. The Saxena Committee emphasized that even the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Government of India, while considering diversion of forest land under the Forest Conservation Act, could not override the veto of *gram sabha*, and that it would be violating the Forest Rights Act if it ignored the wishes of the *gram sabha*.

Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, 2007. The massive displacement of tribals in the wake of development projects and the setting up of Special Economic Zones has contributed in no small measure to the alienation of tribals. It is estimated that around 60 million people were displaced during

the period from 1947 to 2004 involving 25 million hectares of land. The tribals constitute only approximately 8 percent of the country's population, but they are 40 percent of the total displaced/affected persons. The resettlement record has been dismal.

The Government of India announced a new Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy on 11 October 2007 to make the displacement of people for industrial growth a less painful experience. Its salient features are:

- a. Setting up of a National Rehabilitation Commission
- b. Social Impact Assessment of areas where projects involving displacement are undertaken
- c. Mandatory consultation with the *Gram Sabha*
- d. Land in return for land for displaced families
- e. Preference in project jobs to at least one member of each family
- f. Vocational training, scholarships for children, and housing benefits to affected families
- g. Rs. 500 monthly pension for destitutes, widows, and unmarried girls

The scheme is making progress, albeit slowly.

Peace Talks

State governments have also explored the possibility of having peace talks with the left-wing extremists, persuading them to give up the path of violence and join the mainstream. Peace talks were held between the PWG and the Andhra Pradesh state government from June through July 2002 at the initiative of *Committee of Concerned Citizens*. Three rounds of talks were held but there was no agreement on the substantive issues. The PWG called off the talks in protest against the alleged brutal repression of Naxalites by the state police.

The Congress Government voted to power in Andhra Pradesh in May 2004 lifted the ban on PWG and its front organizations, and peace talks were held again from 15-18 October 2004 at Hyderabad. The Naxals presented an 11-point charter of demands, the most important one related to land reforms. They also wanted an "independent commission to be held by a democrat acceptable to all" to identify land for distribution among the

poor people. The charter included demands for the creation of a separate Telangana State, development of backward areas of Andhra and Rayalseema regions, and severing links with the World Bank. There could be no agreement on the contentious issues. The Naxals alleged that the government was continuing with its policy of repression even during the peace period and that there were false encounters. The government, on the other hand, accused the Naxals of insincerity and alleged that they were using the peace period only to regroup and reorganize their battered ranks. The talks broke down, and on 17 August 2005, the state government reimposed the ban on the CPI (Maoist) and its seven front organizations.

Government made a number of overtures during 2010 to bring the Maoists to the negotiating table. The Union Government, on 28 January 2010, said that the security forces' operations would be stopped if the Maoists abjure violence and decide to come to the negotiating table. The offer was repeated on 9 February 2010 by P.C. Chidambaram, Union Home Minister. "My appeal to the left wing guerrillas," he said, is "if you call a halt to violence, we are prepared to talk to you: otherwise, operations will continue and will be followed by development of the areas now dominated by Maoists."⁸⁴

In a letter dated 11 May 2010 to Swami Agnivesh, who has been trying to initiate peace talks, the home minister clarified government's position:

- a. The CPI (Maoist) should announce that they will abjure violence.
- b. Once the announcement is made, the Central Government will consult the chief ministers of the affected states and prepare a response, which will include an invitation to the CPI (Maoist) to hold talks.
- c. On a specified date, we would expect the CPI (Maoist) to stop all violent activities.

If the CPI (Maoist) do not indulge in any act of violence for 72 hours, during which period the security forces will also not conduct any operations, talks could then begin. Once the talks begin, the government would expect the CPI (Maoist) to continue to maintain its position of "no violence" until the talks are concluded.

The Maoist response has been vague. CPI (Maoist) General Secretary Ganapathy said in a written interview that his party was ready for talks provided the Maoist leaders Narayan Sanyal, Amitabha Bagchi, Sushil Roy, and

Kobad Gandhi were released from custody. In a gesture of one-upmanship, Maoist leader Kishenji said on 17 August 2010 that they were prepared for peace talks on the condition that the government agreed to a three-month cease-fire and a judicial probe into the death of Maoist leader Azad, who was killed in an encounter with the police on 2 July 2010. The government rejected the offer on the ground that they had not received any formal communication from the CPI (Maoist) nor had the ultras abjured violence. The government blamed the Maoists for trying to "create confusion and buy time for themselves amid an intense offensive against them from security forces."⁸⁵



Figure 10. Indian Maoists ready their weapons as they take part in a training camp in a forested area of Bijapur District in Chhattisgarh. Photo used by permission of Newscom.

There has thus been no meeting ground so far. The government, having launched an all out offensive against the Maoists, is not prepared to send the forces back to barracks or even scale down the operations until the armed wing of the Maoists—the PLGA—is neutralized. The Maoists, on the other hand, do not appear to be sincere in their offer and likely want to buy time.

People's Support – *Salwa Judum*

The government has also been trying to mobilize the people against the Maoists. The State of Chhattisgarh witnessed a unique experiment in this regard—the *Salwa Judum* (or Peace March), movement.

The background of *Salwa Judum* must be understood. The Naxals were, to start with, welcomed by the Bastar tribals of Chhattisgarh because they were harassed by corrupt revenue, police and forest officials, and exploited by the traders from plains areas. However, in due course, as the Naxals entrenched themselves in the region, they started showing insensitivity to the tribals' feelings, and started interfering with their social customs and cultural practices. *Ghotuls* (youth dormitories) were closed. Weekly bazaars were looted. Traditional celebrations at the time of marriage were discouraged. Village priests were driven away. All this hurt the tribals and there was a feeling of resentment. The proverbial last straw was when the Naxals did not allow the tribals to pluck tendu leaves. This was a regular source of income to them. Enough was enough, the tribals felt. The public resentment against Naxals came out in the open in Kankeli, a village in the Bijapur district, in the first week of June 2005 when the villagers held a



Figure 11. An Indian villager reveals his wounds after being injured in an encounter between Maoist rebels and security forces in Chhattisgarh. Photo used by permission of Newscom.

meeting and resolved not to help them in any way in future. Similar meetings took place in nearby villages also. What started as a trickle soon became a torrent. The leader of opposition in the state, Mahendra Karma, helped in mobilizing the tribals and gave it the shape of *Salwa Judum*, a movement to restore peace in the area. The movement was thus “an outburst of the pent up feelings of the tribals who had suffered for a long while at the hands of the Naxalites.”⁸⁶

The Naxals lost considerable ground and were forced to retreat into the interior areas. They looked upon *Salwa Judum* as a threat to their existence in Chhattisgarh. To retrieve their position, they reacted with great vehemence and made devastating attacks on the villagers supporting *Salwa Judum*. On 27 February 2006, the Naxalites killed 27 people returning from a *Salwa Judum* rally in Darbhaguda village of the Dantewada district. Later, in an attack on the Errabore camp on 17 July 2006, the Naxalites massacred 31 villagers including women and children. These attacks caused a setback to the movement, which gradually lost its momentum. The villagers subscribing to the *Salwa Judum* ideology had to be rehabilitated in 23 relief camps maintained by the state government. The young men among them, who were physically fit and willing, were appointed SPOs under the Police Act, 1861 and Section 9 of Chhattisgarh Police Act, 2007. Needless to say, the SPOs are highly motivated and have been giving a tough fight to Naxals in the area.

There is an orchestrated campaign by the pro-Naxal lobbies to malign *Salwa Judum* and have it disbanded. The National Human Rights Commission, which was asked by the Supreme Court on 21 April 2008 to investigate the allegations against *Salwa Judum*, however, justified it as a “spontaneous revolt of the tribals against years of atrocities and harassment suffered by them at the hands of Naxalites” and emphasized that “the tribals cannot be denied the right to defend themselves against the atrocities perpetrated by the Naxalites.”⁸⁷ The Supreme Court, however, on 5 July 2011, declared the deployment of tribal youth as special police—either as ‘Koya Commandos’, *Salwa Judum*, or any other force—as unconstitutional in response to a petition filed by a human rights activist, alleging illegal recruitment of tribal youth and large scale illegalities committed by them. The Chhattisgarh Assembly thereupon passed an Act authorizing an “auxiliary armed force” to “assist security forces in dealing with Maoist/Naxal violence,” thereby legalizing the existing SPOs by inducting them as its members.

9. Retrospect and Prospect

The Naxalite movement—the biggest ongoing irregular war in India today—would, in retrospect, appear to have gone through three phases. The first phase, starting from the Srikakulam uprising in the mid-1960s and the events in Naxalbari in 1967, which attracted countrywide and even international attention, ended with the death of Charu Mazumdar in 1972. The second phase commenced with the formation of the PWG in Andhra Pradesh in 1980 and lasted until the late 1990s. The internal dissensions leading to the expulsion of Kondapalli Seetharamaiah weakened the party while the sustained counterinsurgency operations by the security forces disintegrated the rank and file. The third phase may be said to have begun with the dawn of the 21st century, when it was decided to militarize the armed component of the party by giving it sophisticated weapons and a regimented structure. The merger of the PWG and MCCI in 2004 and the emergence of the CPI (Maoist) reinforced this trend. The Maoist party claimed its aim was to complete the New Democratic Revolution in India by overthrowing the current system. This revolution was to be carried out and completed through armed revolutionary war, or people's war.

The movement continued to expand territorially and established its presence in 223 districts of 20 states of the country. The question naturally arises as to how and why the movement revives and resurfaces after it is virtually put down by the security forces. The answer lies in the fact that the movement draws its strength and sustenance from the socioeconomic grievances of the people which have not been satisfactorily addressed. The Naxalite ideology may be convoluted, its logic may be flawed, and the formulations may be irrelevant, yet it strikes a sympathetic chord among sections of people, who find the existing government apparatus insensitive to their aspirations and callous to their sufferings.

These socioeconomic problems are, broadly speaking, related to poverty, land reforms, unemployment, corruption, tribals' rights, and governance.

Poverty

Poverty continues to be a major problem despite the government having implemented 11 five-year plans. The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12) credits the Government of India with having successfully reduced the share of poor

in the population by 27.4 percentage points from 54.9 in 1973 to 27.5 in 2004. It nevertheless concedes that 60 years after independence over a quarter of the population still remains poor. The document further says that there is growing consensus that the poverty line is based on a consumption basket which is too lean.

The World Bank's latest poverty estimates broadly support the Government of India's findings. It says that a look at the 25-year period between 1981 and 2005 shows that India has moved from having 60 percent of its people living on less than \$1.25 a day to 42 percent. The number of people living below a dollar a day (2005 prices) has also come down from 42 percent to 24 percent over the same period. Both measures, according to the World Bank, show that "India has maintained even progress against poverty since the 1980s."⁸⁸

There are different estimates of poverty by other expert bodies. The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative for the United Nations Development Programs has evolved a Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) which attempts to capture more than just income poverty at the household level and comprises 10 indicators including child enrollment, nutrition, drinking water, sanitation, electricity, et cetera. As per its calculation, about 645 million people or 55 percent of India's population is poor. What is worse, there are more 'MPI poor' people (42.1 crore) in the eight Indian states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, UP, and West Bengal than in the 26 poorest African countries combined (41 crore).⁸⁹

On the other hand, in 2009, India had 126,700 high net worth individuals. This represented an increase of more than 50 percent over the corresponding figure of 2008.⁹⁰ They constitute only 0.01 percent of the population but their combined worth is over thirty percent of India's gross national income. The inequality is glaring. The overall picture thus shows that while on the one hand the number of rich is increasing, it is also true that poverty figures are at a fairly high level.

The Expert Group constituted by the Planning Commission to study *Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas* (2008) expressed the view that "the development paradigm pursued since independence has aggravated the prevailing discontent among marginalized sections of society."⁹¹ This was because the paradigm was insensitive to the needs and concerns of these sections, causing irreparable damage to them. The benefits

of the paradigm, the Expert Group deplored, had been “disproportionately cornered by the dominant sections at the expense of the poor, who have borne most of the costs.”⁹² It expressed its apprehensions in the following words:

India is today proudly proclaiming an above 9 percent growth rate and striving to achieve double digit growth. But it is a matter of common observation that the inequalities between classes, between town and country, and between the upper classes and the under-privileged communities are increasing. That this has potential for tremendous unrest is recognized by all.⁹³

The Maoist movement is a manifestation of the social unrest.

Land Reforms

Land reforms come under the jurisdiction of the states, but the Union Government has been playing an advisory and coordinating role in the matter. These reforms involve abolition of intermediaries, tenancy reforms with security to actual cultivators, redistribution of surplus ceiling land, consolidation of holdings, and updating of land records.

Unfortunately, land reforms have become a forgotten item of the planning agenda. Progress under this head, even according to the Planning Commission, has been “dismal.” It has been rightly said that land reforms are today “a romantic theme for the intellectual, a populist slogan for the politician, and a persistent source of hope for the landless.” A study entitled *State Agrarian Relations and the Unfinished Tasks in Land Reforms* conducted by the Rural Development Ministry brought out that “the present schematic and legal arrangement for the restoration of tribal land has not been successful on account of a number of factors, including the convergence of interests amongst the political groups, bureaucracy and classes alienating the tribal lands.”⁹⁴

The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) document mentions that the total area declared surplus so far has been 73.5 lakh acres, out of which only 53.9 lakh acres could be distributed. There are also widespread complaints that lands allotted to the rural poor are not in their possession. In some cases, *pattas* (deeds) were issued to the beneficiaries but possession was

not delivered in respect of the lands shown in the *pattas* or corresponding changes in the record of rights were not made. It has also been seen that the rural poor allottees of surplus land are dragged into litigation by the erstwhile land-owners against which the allottees are not able to defend themselves. “The results of implementation of the ceiling laws are far from satisfactory.”⁹⁵

Unemployment

The basic weakness on the employment front, as admitted by the Planning Commission, is “the failure of the Indian economy to create a sufficient volume of additional high quality employment to absorb the new entrants into the labor force while also facilitating the absorption of surplus labor that currently exists in the agricultural sector, into higher wage, non-agricultural employment.”⁹⁶

The Eleventh Plan document states that the rate of unemployment increased from 6.1 percent in 1993-94 to 7.3 percent in 1999-2000, and further to 8.3 percent in 2004-05. Among agricultural labor households, unemployment rose from 9.5 percent in 1993-94 to 15.3 percent in 2004-05. The non-agricultural employment expanded at a robust annual rate of 4.7 percent during the period 1999-2000 to 2004-05, but this growth was largely in the unorganized sector. The Planning Commission came to the uncomfortable conclusion that despite fairly healthy gross domestic product growth, employment in the organized sector had actually declined, leading to frustration among the educated youth. The phenomenon was described as one of “jobless growth.”

A random survey⁹⁷ carried out in Andhra Pradesh showed that in a number of cases, the youth were attracted to the PWG in the absence of a job. The possession of a weapon and the fear he evoked as a member of an underground organization gave him both money and status.

Corruption

Corruption in India is a big problem. There is no government department which is immune from this malaise. As stated by Mehbub-ul-Haq, a famous economist, corruption in South Asia has four characteristics that make it far more damaging than corruption in other parts of the world:

- a. Corruption in South Asia occurs upstream, that is at the highest level, distorting decisions and policies
- b. Corruption money in South Asia has wings, that is the gains are immediately smuggled out to safe havens abroad
- c. Corruption often leads to promotion, not prison
- d. Corruption hurts the poor most because the region has a high poverty level

The Supreme Court of India, while recording its judgment in a case, observed that “the tentacles of corruption are spreading fast in the society corroding the moral fiber and consequently in most cases the economic structure of the country.”⁹⁸ Corruption is, in fact, upsetting all the calculations of development planning. A former chief minister of Jharkhand and three of his erstwhile colleagues were accused of amassing assets running into several hundred crore and investing them in foreign countries like Thailand and Liberia. Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia, admitted that a study of the Public Distribution System had revealed that only 16 paise (1 paise equals 1/100 rupee) out of a rupee was reaching the targeted poor.

A report prepared by the Global Financial Integrity, an international organization that keeps track of illicit conduct of business, brought out that the corrupt siphoned off \$125 billion from India during the period 2000 to 2008. It said that the so-called ‘trickle down theory’ has apparently not worked because “funds meant to reach beneficiaries down the ladder have been stealthily stolen and stashed away abroad by dishonest politicians and unscrupulous corporates.”⁹⁹

Corruption slows down economic development, affects poverty alleviation, retards the delivery of services and, in the process, alienates the people, undermines their faith in the fairness and legitimacy of the state, and thereby provides fertile ground for the sustenance and spread of Naxalite ideology. Fortunately, there is a strong anti-corruption movement in the country with the demand for an independent *Lokpal* (ombudsman) who should have sweeping powers to deal with the corrupt.

Tribal Rights

There are 84.33 million tribal people (also known as Scheduled Tribes) in India as per the census of 2001. They constitute 8.2 percent of the total population of the country with 91.7 percent of them living in rural areas and only 8.3 percent in urban areas. Among the major states, Chhattisgarh (31.8 percent) has the highest percentage of population followed by Jharkhand (26.3 percent) and Orissa (22.1 percent). These states, significantly, have strong Naxal presence.

The architects of the Constitution of India were conscious of the need to protect the identity of the tribal communities, and therefore they made specific provisions in Articles 244, 244A, 275, 338A, 339, and 342 of the Constitution to safeguard their interests. Besides, the central and the state governments enacted several laws to promote the welfare and uphold the interests of the tribals. These included the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955; the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989; the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996; and the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

However, as recorded by the Expert Group of Planning Commission on *Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Area* in 2008:

Despite the plethora of development plans, programmes and activities initiated in the tribal areas, the majority of Scheduled Tribes still live in conditions of serious deprivation and poverty. The tribal people have remained backward in all aspects of human development including education, health, nutrition, etc. Apart from socio-economic deprivation, there has been a steady erosion of traditional tribal rights and their command over resources.¹⁰⁰

The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12) also admits that the tribal scenario characteristically manifests the following features: increasing tribal alienation on account of slipping economic resources like land, forest, common property resources; displacement and dispossession of life-support systems; general apathy of official machinery; escalating atrocities, at times related to assertion of rights; growing clout of market forces; and meager advancement through planned development efforts.¹⁰¹

Regarding alienation of tribal land, a report of the Ministry of Rural Development (2005) showed that 3.75 lakh cases of tribal land alienation were registered covering 8.55 lakh acres of land, and that out of the above only 1.62 lakh cases could be disposed of in favor of the tribals covering a total area of 4.47 lakh acres. The remaining cases were either rejected or were pending.

Displacement as a consequence of development has also caused great hardship to the tribals. Planning Commission's Expert Group (2008), quoting unofficial studies, stated that around 60 million people had been displaced from 25 million hectares during 1947-2004. The tribals were the worst sufferers in the sense that while they constitute only 8.08 percent of the country's population, they were 40 percent of the total displaced/affected persons.¹⁰²

The Planning Commission admits that extremist activities in tribal districts have been linked to alienation of tribal land among other issues.

Governance

“Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development,” former Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan said in 1998.¹⁰³ Addressing the chief secretaries and the state police chiefs in New Delhi on 18 January 2004, India’s prime minister said that one of the fundamental reasons for the ills of insurgency, extremism, and crimes affecting internal security was the lack of good governance, especially at the cutting-edge level. The Planning Commission's Expert Group (2008) found that areas of Central India where there was unrest (in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and parts of Maharashtra) were “minimally administered” and that:

State interventions both for development and for law and order had been fairly low. In fact there is a kind of vacuum of administration in these areas which is being exploited by the armed movement, giving some illusory protection and justice to the local population.¹⁰⁴

The Expert Group went on to say that the failing to provide infrastructure and services as per national norms was “one of the many discriminatory

manifestations of governance here”¹⁰⁵ and that these disparities result in the non-availability or poor availability of the essential services. Abujhmarh in the Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh is a classic example of poor governance. It is a 4000 square kilometer area comprising 260 villages inhabited by tribals, particularly of the Maria group. The terrain here is no doubt difficult. However, there could be no justification for the area not having been surveyed to date and the absence of any regular revenue or police post in the region. No wonder, the Maoists established a ‘liberated zone’ in Abujhmarh. As noted by the Expert Group, even in areas which are not so inaccessible, “the absence of adequate public intervention, especially in education, health and employment has allowed the non-state actors to push their agenda among the people.”¹⁰⁶

The government has initiated a number of measures to improve the quality of governance. The Right to Information Act was introduced in 2005. An e-Governance Plan was adopted for 27 major areas to improve the delivery of services. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was launched in 2006. The rights of tribals in forests were recognized through the Forest Rights Act. The government is giving high priority to health care and education, particularly in the rural areas. The process of police reforms has been initiated. The Lokpal Act to combat corruption in a comprehensive manner is on the anvil. However, the country has still a long way to go to improve its governance.

Concluding Observations

The Maoists have established their presence over a vast swathe of territory in the country. The home minister himself acknowledged that various groups subscribing to left-wing extremism ideology have their pockets of influence in 20 states across the country and that over 2,000 police station areas in 223 districts of these states are partially or substantially affected by the movement. The CPI (Maoist) is the most potent of the Naxal groups with a presence in 17 states and a 90 percent share of Naxal violence.

The prime minister, while addressing the police chiefs of the country on 15 September 2009, reiterated that “left-wing extremism is, perhaps, the gravest internal security threat our country faces.” He was candid enough to admit that “we have not achieved as much success as we would have liked in containing this menace” and that it was a matter of concern that despite

government efforts, “the level of violence in the affected states continues to rise.”¹⁰⁷

The steady expansion of Maoist influence across the country is to be attributed basically to two reasons: firstly, the confusion in government on how to handle the problem and the strategy which should be adopted for the purpose; and, secondly, poor governance in the remote areas of the country contributing to a sense of alienation among the poor people, especially the tribals. The confusion in government has been at the highest level. The prime minister highlighted the threat of left-wing extremism as far back as 2004 and described it as the greatest threat to the country’s internal security. The then home minister, however, had a different perception of the problem. He looked upon Maoists as misguided people who had to be persuaded to join the mainstream. It is only after P.C. Chidambaram took over as home minister toward the end of 2008 that there has been clarity in understanding the gravity of the Maoist threat, and the Prime Minister’s Office and the Home Ministry have been working in tandem. Governance issues are also now being tackled with seriousness and a sense of urgency. The home minister has expressed his optimism that they will be able to contain the Maoist problem within the next few years. The target is achievable with refinement in the overall strategy and fine tuning of tactics.

However, the fact remains that the factors which gave rise to Naxalism—extreme poverty, neglect of land reforms, rising unemployment, tribals getting a raw deal, and poor governance—are, unfortunately, very much present today also. The flagship programs are all “caught in a complex web of delayed decision making, non-utilization of funds and sluggishness.”¹⁰⁸ Unless the basic issues are sincerely addressed, a security-centric approach alone would not lead to permanent resolution of the problem. The security forces of the country are quite capable of neutralizing the Maoists’ People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army. However, from a long term point of view, the issues of economic justice and good governance would have to be addressed.

There are some hopeful signs. The Planning Commission has approved a Rs. 14,000 crore (more than \$2.6 billion) plan for the 60 Naxal-affected districts on the condition that the states undertake governance reforms and improve the performance of existing flagship programs, particularly the NREGA, Forest Rights Act and the Panchyat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act. The states are also being motivated to enhance the capability of the

police forces and augment their manpower. Counterinsurgency institutes are being set up in different parts of the country to train the police and para-military personnel. The corrupt have started feeling the heat. Chief ministers of two states (Jharkhand and Arunachal Pradesh) were jailed recently for the irregularities they committed. There is new awareness about guaranteeing tribals their forest rights. The shutting down of Vedanta mines in Orissa to protect the abode of the Dongaria Kondh and Kutia Kondh tribes has been a significant step in this direction. The center has asked the states to ensure that tribals are not evicted from national parks and sanctuaries till their rights under the Forest Rights Act are settled. The Government of India has also formed a National Council for Tribal Welfare to review periodically the implementation of the Forest Rights Act and other programs aimed at protecting vulnerable tribals groups and giving general policy guidelines.

Besides, the security forces' offensive appears to be making a dent on the Maoist movement. According to latest figures available, the spread of the movement has been contained to 182 districts.¹⁰⁹ The Abujmarh, a 4,000-square kilometer area of Chhattisgarh inhabited by tribals, where the Maoists had established a liberated zone, has been cleared after a massive operation by the CRPF in early 2012. The Maoist leadership has suffered considerable attrition. Out of 16 members of the politburo, two have been killed while another seven are in custody; and out of 39 members of the central committee, five have been liquidated while thirteen are in custody. The resultant partial vacuum in leadership has naturally affected command and control of the CPI (Maoist) party.

Does Maoism have a future in India? To the extent the movement espouses social and economic causes, it will continue and, wherever there are glaring inequalities or outrageous discrimination, it would even blossom. The wretched of the earth—the exploited, the oppressed, the deprived, and the alienated—with sorrow and fury in their hearts, as Francisco de Quevedo said, would continue to wage battles against the system. But any political design of capturing power or ushering in what the Maoists call a New Democratic Revolution are doomed to fail and only bring unnecessary suffering to the people. The Indian State, with all its failings, is no banana republic. It has enormous strength and, once its leaders make up their mind, the most lethal movement can be stamped out, as happened in the Punjab.

The Maoist leadership, in spite of all the advances which their movement has made, appears to be caught in a time warp. They are still mouthing phrases and repeating jargon which Russia has buried and China has conveniently forgotten. Russia went through an agonizing period of de-Stalinization and, during Gorbachev's period, the empire fell apart. In China, the Maoist theories have been gradually abandoned. The People's Republic of China is today focused on economic progress and has, in the process, made compromises with the capitalism of the West. There is a campaign even to reevaluate the contribution of Chairman Mao Zedong. Liberal intellectuals like Mao Yushi have argued that Mao "should be put on trial" for the atrocious blunders that led to the deaths of tens of millions of Chinese. The official Chinese media has also published articles confirming that Mao made serious miscalculations when he launched the Great Leap Forward campaign in the mid-1950s.¹¹⁰

The Maoists, besides, appear to be out of sync with the dreams and aspirations of the average Indian. They talk of ushering in a Democratic Revolution in the country and yet try to disrupt every election. They claim to be champions of the poor but they sabotage development projects in the remote areas which would have raised the standard of living of the poor people. They pretend to espouse the cause of tribals but they antagonized the tribals of Bastar by interfering with their social customs and cultural practices. They claim to be patriots and yet they have a nexus with the anti-national forces.

The Maoists would do well to accept the realities of the changing times and adapt themselves to an environment where Marxism-Leninism-Maoism has ceased to have any significant relevance. 

Glossary

<i>Bandh</i>	Strike, shut down
<i>Barga</i>	Share-cropping
<i>Bazaar</i>	Market
<i>Crore</i>	Ten million
<i>Dada</i>	Bully
<i>Dal</i>	Group
<i>Dalam</i>	Squad
<i>Dalit</i>	Scheduled castes
<i>Desabhaktulu</i>	Patriot
<i>Dora</i>	Landlord in Andhra
<i>Gaon/Gram Sabha</i>	Village Council
<i>Ghotul</i>	Dormitory for the youth
<i>Girijan</i>	Hill people, tribals
<i>Godown</i>	Warehouse
<i>Goonda</i>	Bad character
<i>Greyhounds</i>	Elite anti-Naxal force
<i>Jan Adalat</i>	People's Court
<i>Jotedar</i>	Landlord
<i>Kulaks</i>	Wealthy peasants

Glossary

<i>Lakh</i>	One hundred thousand
<i>Lathi</i>	Stick used to defend/attack
<i>Lokpal</i>	Ombudsman
<i>Mandal</i>	Division
<i>Patta</i>	Deed
<i>Salwa Judum</i>	Peace march in Gondi language, an anti-Naxal movement
<i>Sarpanch</i>	Head of Village Council
<i>Tehsil</i>	Sub-division
<i>Tendu patta</i>	Leaves of tendu tree, which are dried and smoked as cheap alternative to tobacco
<i>Zamindar</i>	Landlord

Appendix A

The People's Guerrilla Army (2006)¹¹¹

PROGRAMME & CONSTITUTION

Article 1: The People's Liberation Army is the main instrument in the hands of the CPI (ML)[PEOPLE'S WAR] and all the people of India in the achievement of the task of overthrow, specifically of imperialism and the state power of the big bourgeoisie, big landlord classes collaborating with it and the establishment in its place of a new democratic state under the leadership of the working class. It, will, in every stage of the revolution, strive for the victory of the people and will firmly adhere to the glorious task of preserving the victories won by the people and to the cause of socialism.

Article 2. The line of protracted people's war is our military strategy. That means, encircling the cities from the countryside and ultimately capturing state power. Towards the achievement of that aim, the people's army will fight under party's leadership developing its forces to the extent possible, consolidating them, wiping out the enemy forces to the extent possible and building guerrilla zones with the aim of establishment of Liberated Areas.

Article 3. In accordance with the changing war conditions the PGA has to acquire expertise in guerrilla and mobile warfare and the People's Liberation Army has to acquire expertise in positional warfare.

Article 4. The PGA will extend full backing to People's State Power, that gets formed in the guerrilla zones and base areas. It will fight with all its might to defend the People's State Power from enemy onslaughts and to offer support to the People's State Power, in its exercise of its power over the exploiting classes. It will stand by the people, in the implementation of People's Democracy; it stands answerable to the people.

Article 5. The PGA is a political and military force quite different from revolutionary mass organizations. It forms a detachment in the Army of the International Proletariats.

Article 6. The party defines the strategy and tactics of the revolution. As a part of it, the CC [Central Committee] will formulate in accordance with circumstances, the concrete forms of organization and forms of war that are to be followed during the various stages of the people's war. The Central Military Commission will guide the military affairs in accordance with them. The military (operational) command will give direct leadership to field operations. The people's army always keeps M-L-M politics in command. The party will have full control over the army. M-L-M ensures that this does not get reversed. The party is the leader who stands at the forefront of the people's army.

Article 7. The peoples army at present exists in the form of PGA. This has to be developed as the People's Liberation Army and expanded. The people's guerrilla army is an armed organization formed for the achievement of political aims of the revolution. While, on the one hand, waging war to destroy enemy's military might, it has to take up other political tasks like, conduction of propaganda among the people, organizing the people, arming of the people, helping the people in the establishment of revolutionary power, formation of Party Organizations etc.

Article 8. The survival and growth of the PGA depends on, going deeply among the people and gaining their love and affection. The PGA firmly opposes the pure military outlook which is divorced from the masses and adventurism. It will function adhering to the mass line.

Article 9. At present PGA will be in the following forms. Military formations at platoon and higher levels that will move to any place and participate in war, according to the demands of war and on the orders of commission/ command, and the action teams will constitute the main forces, the special guerrilla squads, local guerrilla squads and action teams which will be under the jurisdiction of various divisions/districts will constitute the secondary forces and the people's militia will constitute the basic forces. As the people's guerrilla army expands, changes will occur in its forms.

Article 10. In the PGA, all the formations from platoon and above, will have party committees. The party branch will be formed with party members. Various squads will have a party cell or a party branch. A committee at that

level can be formed where needed. Party members too will be there in the militia along with ordinary young men and women.

Article 11. All kinds of forces in the PGA will function under the leadership of respective party committees. They must implement the decisions of those party committees.

Article 12. Party members in PGA can be invited according to their level to party conferences/plenums at respective levels. In general, the party committees of military formation at platoon and higher levels will be elected in conferences.

Article 13. Democratic relations only will prevail in the PGA. The PGA will give honourable treatment to the surrendered enemy soldiers. It will strictly adhere to the three rules of discipline formulated by comrade Mao; it will sincerely try to implement the 8 points of attention.

Article 14. The PGA participation in labor and will cherish labor.

Article 15. The PGA will participate in the propaganda and agitations programmes as directed by Party Committees. It will organize the people. The PGA will extensively employ people's art forms in its propaganda. It will try to enhance the consciousness of the people.

Article 16. Any male or female, who has reached the age of 16 will be eligible to join the PGA. They should have the determination to fight with the enemy with hatred. They should be of good health. They must posses the minimum of consciousness of participating in the service of the people with commitment and dedications. They must hate the enemy and cherish the people.

Appendix B

Press Release Issued after the Ninth Party Congress (2007)
CPI (Maoist) completes its much-awaited historic Unity Congress –
9th Congress - A Turning Point in Indian Revolution¹¹²

The successful completion of the Unity Congress-9th Congress of the CPI (Maoist) in January-February 2007 is an event of historic significance for the oppressed masses of India and the world people at large. It achieved a higher level of unity throughout the Party and marked the completion of the unity of the two great streams of the Indian revolution-the CPI (ML) and the MCCI-that took place on 21 September 2004. It resolved the disputed political issues in the Party through lively, democratic and comradely debate and discussion. The present Congress, held after a period of 36 years since the 8th Congress in 1970, stands out as another milestone in the long history of the Communist movement in India and has great significance in the history of the Maoist movement in India.

The Unity Congress-9th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) was held deep in the forests of one of the several Guerrilla Zones in the country. Under the protective umbrella provided by three Companies of the PLGA, with several sentry posts keeping round-the-clock vigil around the venue of the Congress-Comrades CM-KC Commune-with Patrolling Teams continuously scouring for enemy movements, and with the people in the surrounding villages acting as the eyes and ears of the Party, the Congress was completed successfully foiling all the attempts of the reactionary ruling classes to obstruct it. A few days prior to the Congress, Comrade Chandramouli alias Naveen, a member of the Central Committee and the Central Military Commission of the CPI (Maoist), his life-partner and Divisional Committee member comrade Karuna, were arrested, tortured cruelly and murdered by the [Andhra Pradesh State Intelligence Bureau] goons. These two comrades stood steadfast in the torture chambers and gave up their lives placing the interests of the people and the Party above all else thereby contributing to the success of the Congress. The Congress Hall was aptly christened as comrades Karam Singh-Chandramouli Hall after comrade Chandramouli and another martyr comrade and PB member,

comrade Shamshersingh Sheri alias Karam Singh, who passed away in October 2005.

The Congress was held amidst massive enemy encirclement with the government setting up a special cell to foil the Congress. All the Guerrilla Zone areas were placed under the intelligence scanner with special surveillance on unusual movements in and around these zones. The media had even speculated on the probable dates of the Congress. Yet, amidst this extensive encirclement, over one hundred delegates from 16 states, comprising the core of the Maoist leadership of India, wound their way to the venue.

The inauguration of the Congress was done by the outgoing general secretary of the Party, Com Ganapathi. Com Kishan welcomed the entire gathering; wreaths were laid at the Martyr's Memorial column and glowing tributes were paid to the great martyrs comrades who had laid down their lives in the period since the 8th Congress. This was followed by a procession that converged at the Karam Singh-Chandramouli Congress Hall where the delegation began the deliberations.

This historic Congress adopted the five basic documents of the unified Party - *Hold high the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism*, the Programme of the Party, The Constitution, the Strategy and Tactics of the India Revolution and the Political Resolution on the current International and Domestic situation-after thoroughgoing and intense discussions in a free and frank manner. It also focused its attention on a review of the past practice of the two erstwhile Maoist parties since their formation in 1969, the three-year post-Congress review of the erstwhile PWG from 2001 to 2004 and also the 2-year practice of the newly formed party. Besides, it passed resolutions on the important political issues of the day --- both international and domestic --- made the necessary organizational changes and elected a new central committee. The Congress was the culmination of the process that has been going on throughout the Party over the last two years where the documents were discussed in depth and Conferences were held at the area, district, regional and the State level and hundreds of amendments were sent to the Congress from below.

The Unity Congress reaffirmed the general line of the new democratic revolution with agrarian revolution as its axis and protracted people's war as the path of the Indian revolution that had first come into the agenda with the Naxalbari upsurge. It further enriched the politico-military line

of the Party. It set several new tasks for the party with the main focus on establishment of base areas as the immediate, basic and central task before the entire party. It also resolved to advance the people's war throughout the country, further strengthen the people's army, deepen the mass base of the party and wage a broad-based militant mass movement against the neo-liberal policies of globalization, liberalization, privatization pursued by the reactionary ruling classes under the dictates of imperialism.

The significant additions/development to the party documents were: the pin-pointing of the specific character of Indian feudalism/semi-feudalism as being deeply interwoven with caste system and Brahminical ideology; and assessment of the changes taking place in the agrarian situation especially in Punjab within the semi-feudal framework and its impact on our tactics; more clarity on the Comprador Bureaucrat Bourgeoisie (CBB) in the Indian context; a deeper understanding of the concepts of Guerrilla Base, Base Area, Dual Power, etc particularly in the Indian context; advancing the people's war and turning the PLGA into PLA, guerrilla war into mobile war, and the Guerrilla Zones into Base Areas; the importance and significance of work in the working-class, the United Front and other such importance issues.

The Congress also passed a number of political resolutions on numerous current events like: world people's struggles, support to the nationality struggles, against Indian expansionism, on post-Khairlanji Dalit upsurge and against caste oppression, against Hindu fascism, against Special Economic Zones and displacement, etc. Resolutions were also passed on the strengthening of the three magic weapons of the Party, People's Army and the United Front. The two-year financial balance sheet of the unified Party was presented to the House. After that the outgoing CC presented its collective self-criticism, pin-pointing the main areas of its weakness and invited the Congress delegates to present their criticisms. After this process a new CC was elected, which then re-elected Com Ganapathi as the General Secretary of the Party.

The Congress was completed amongst great euphoria with a Call to the world people *Rise up as a tide to smash Imperialism and all its running dogs! Advance the Revolutionary war throughout the world!!* The Unity Congress-9th Congress of the CPI (Maoist) finally called on the people of India to come forward in large numbers to support the ongoing people's war in the country and the embryonic power emerging, to build a truly democratic

society built on justice, equality, free from the chains of imperialism and semi-feudal bondage.

Ganapathi,
General Secretary,
CPI (Maoist)
Feb 19, 2007.

Endnotes

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